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APRIL 22 & 29, 2002

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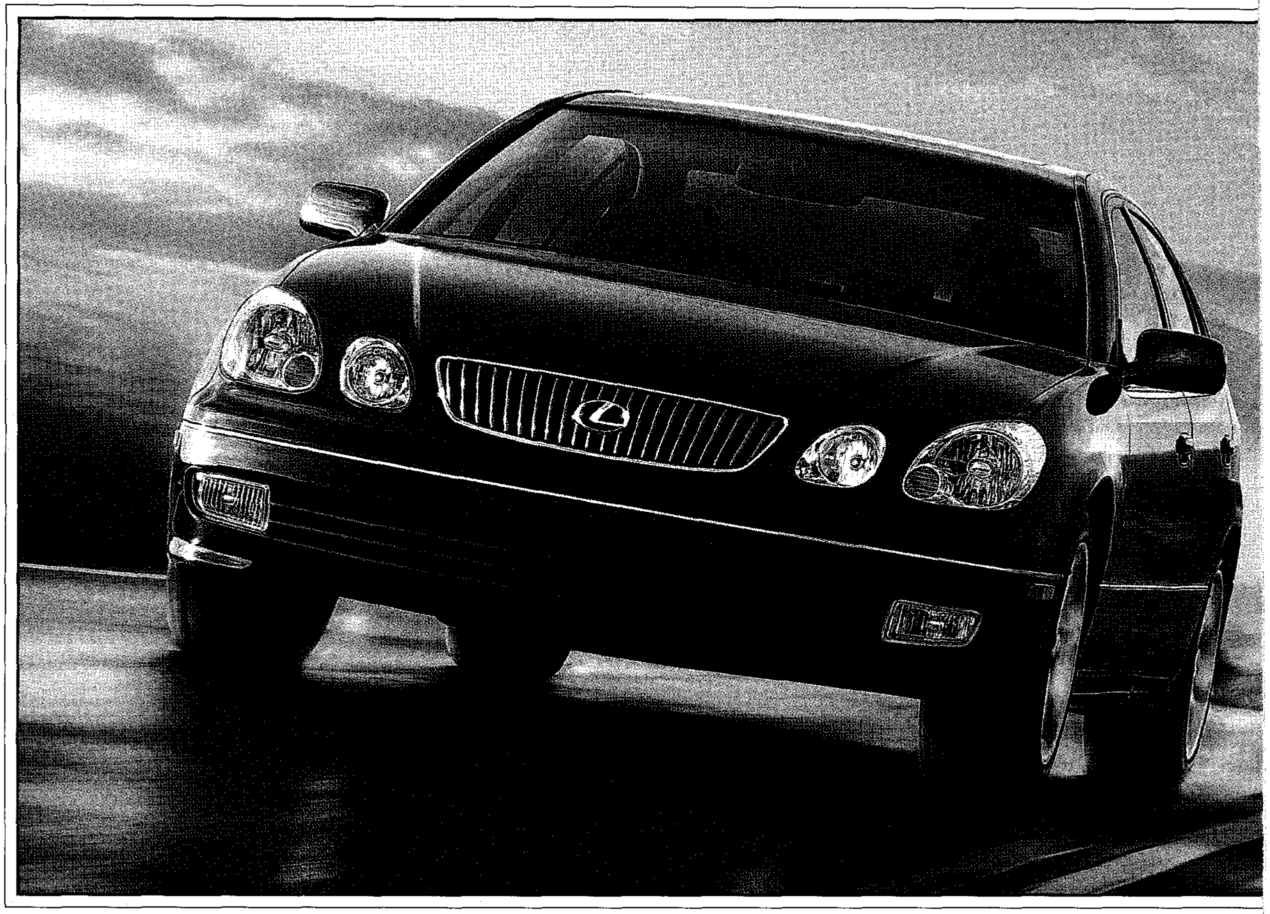

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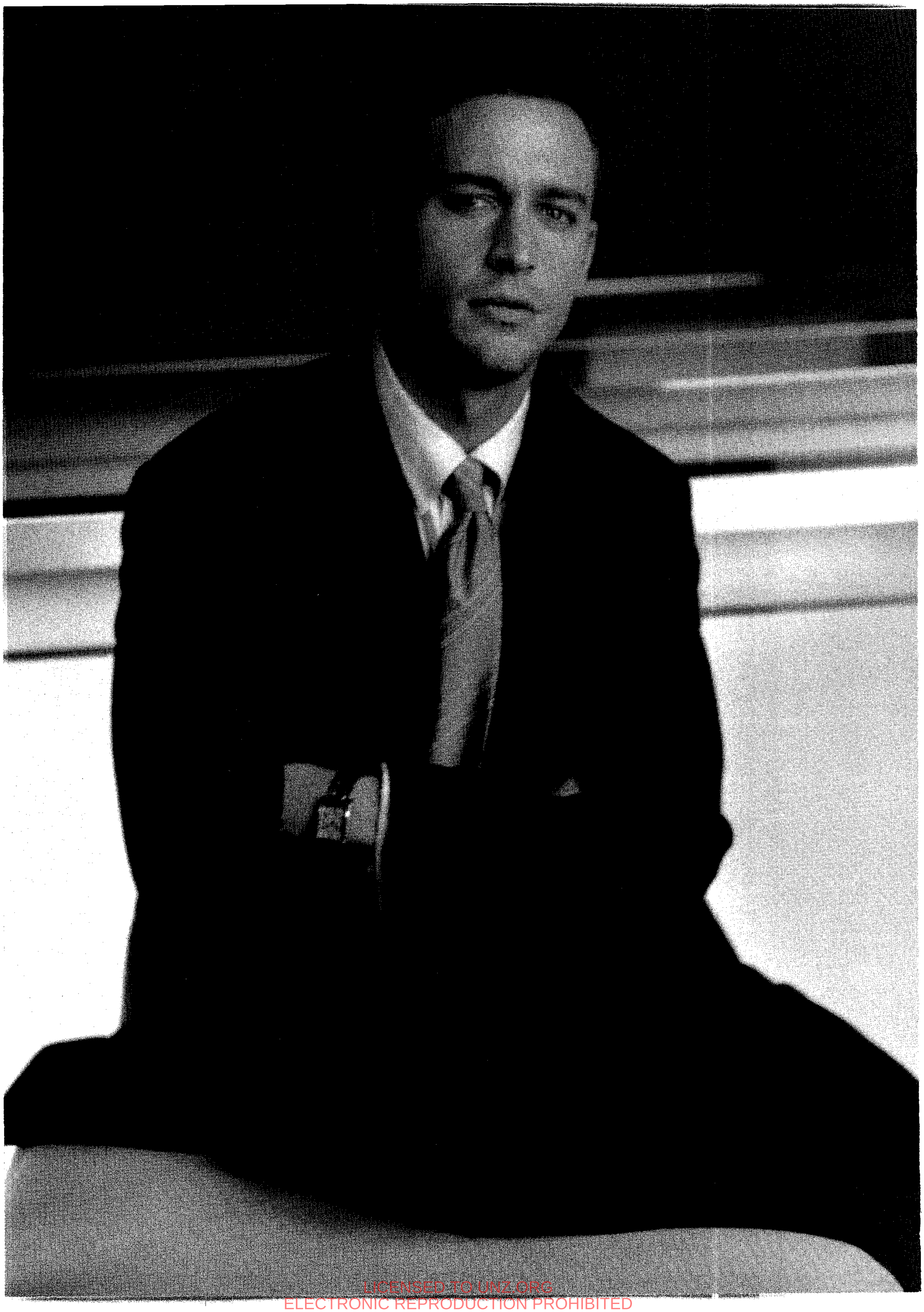

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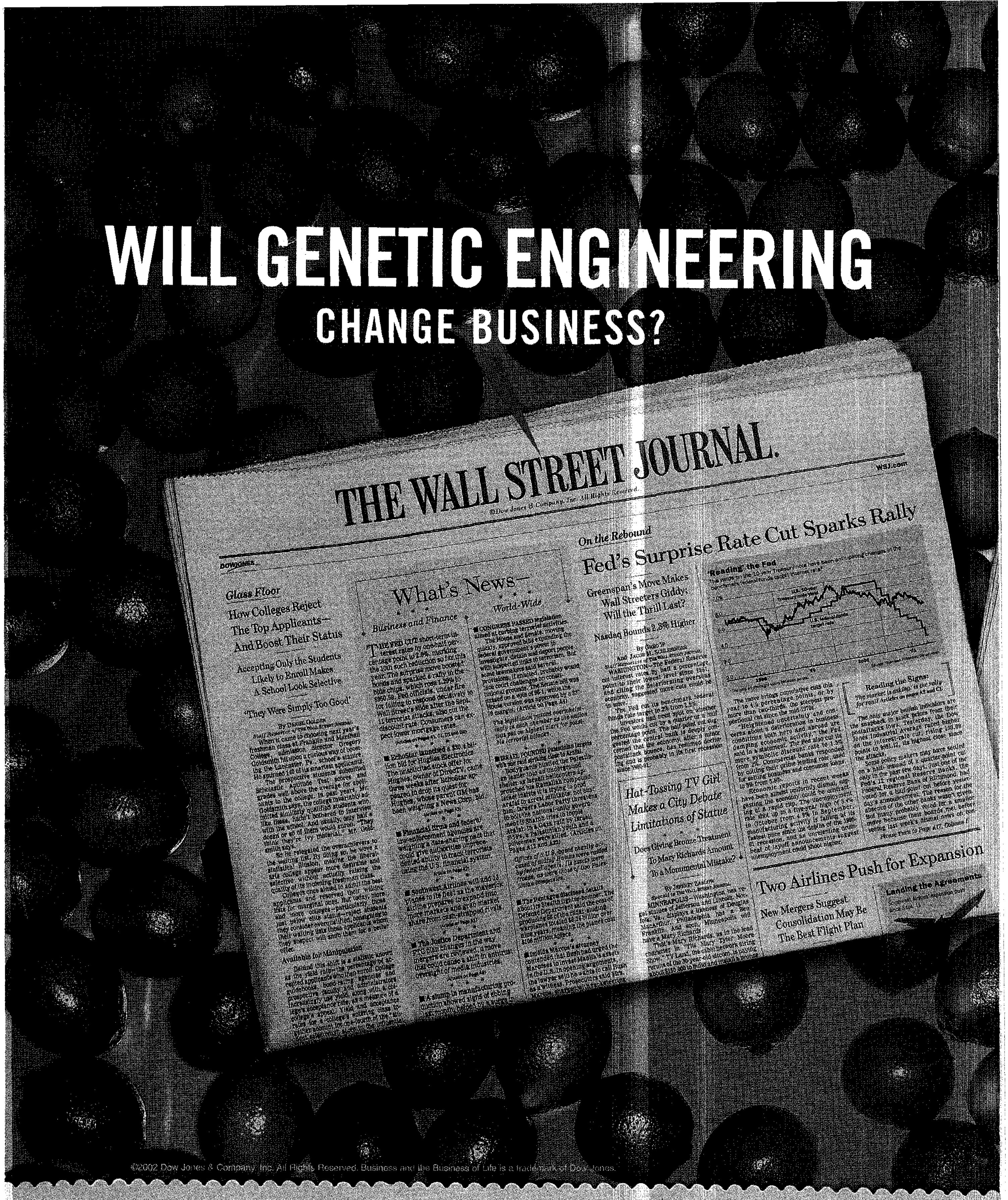

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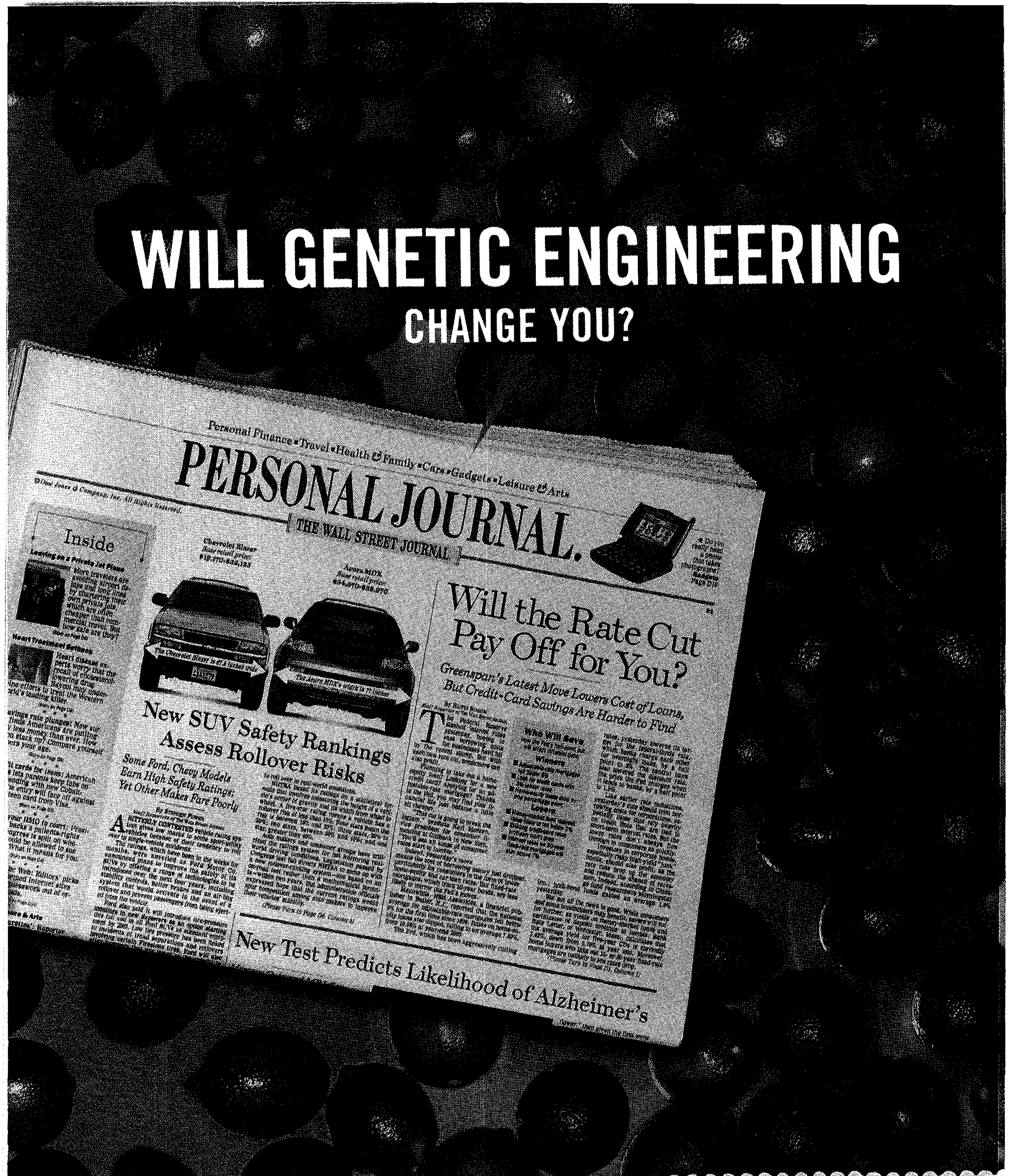

Personal Finance • Travel • Health & Family • Cars • Gadgets • Leisure & Arts

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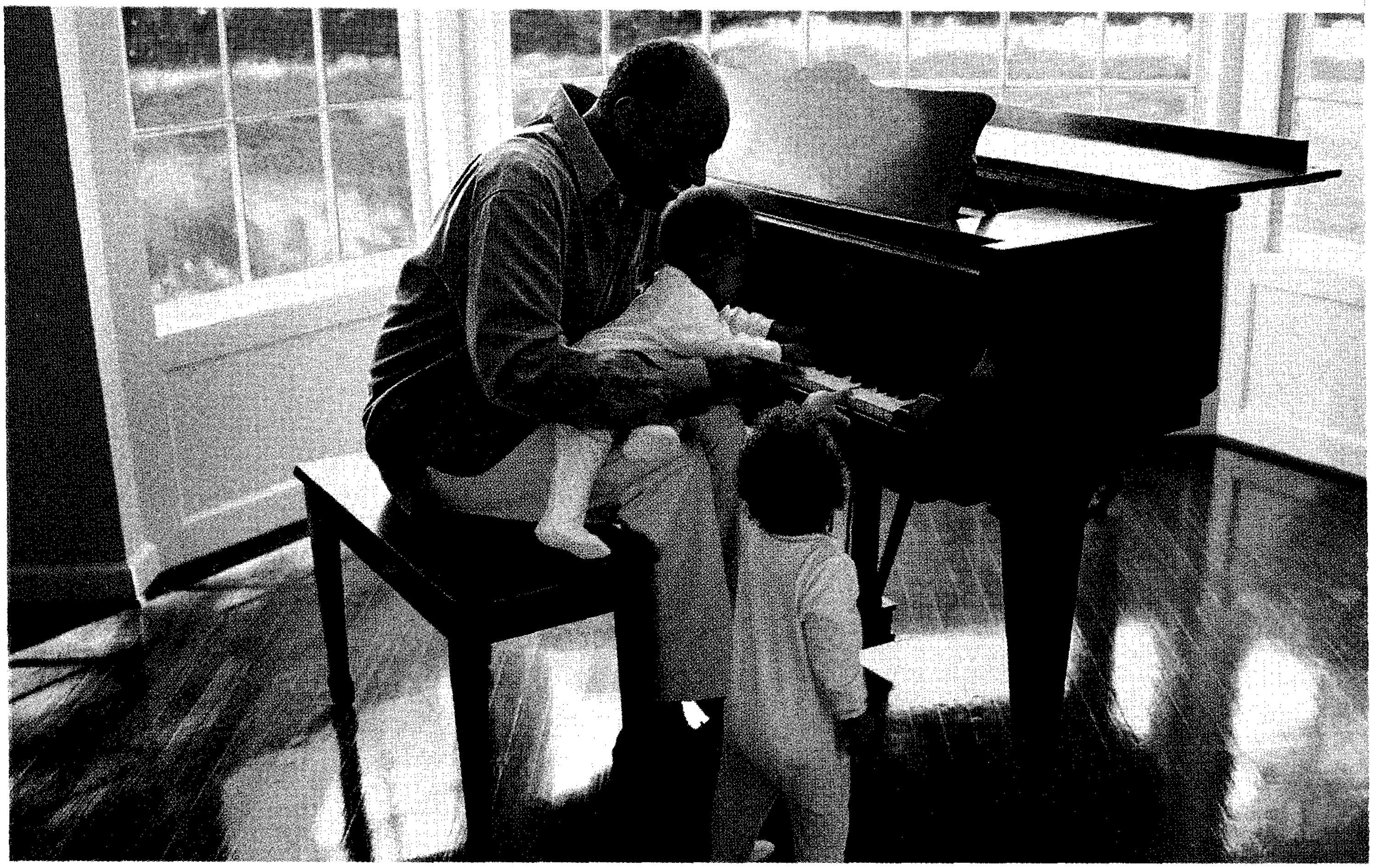
RUSS, TAKING CARE OF HIS GRANDDAUGHTERS FOR THE WEEKEND.



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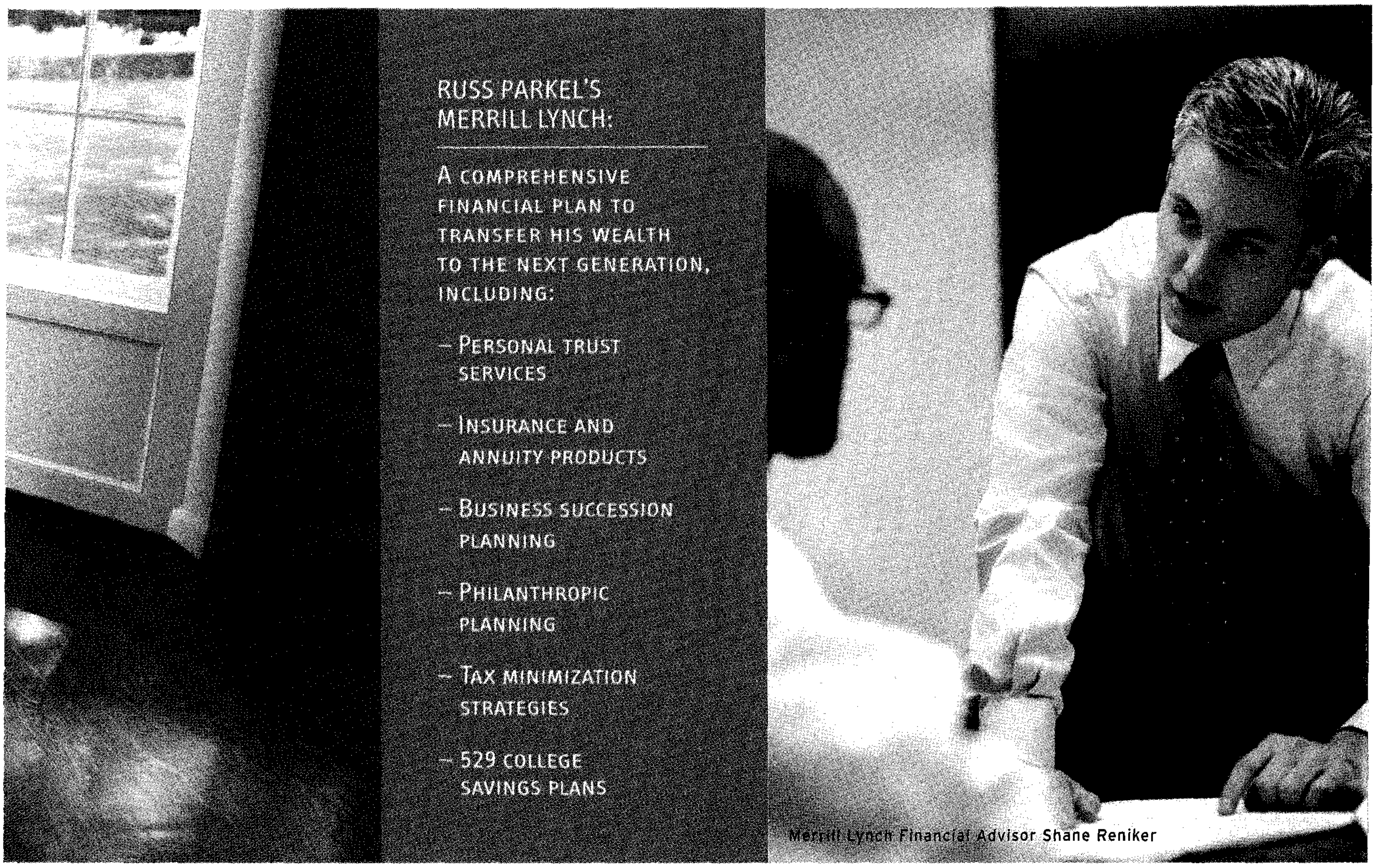
GRANDDAUGHTERS FOR THE FUTURE.



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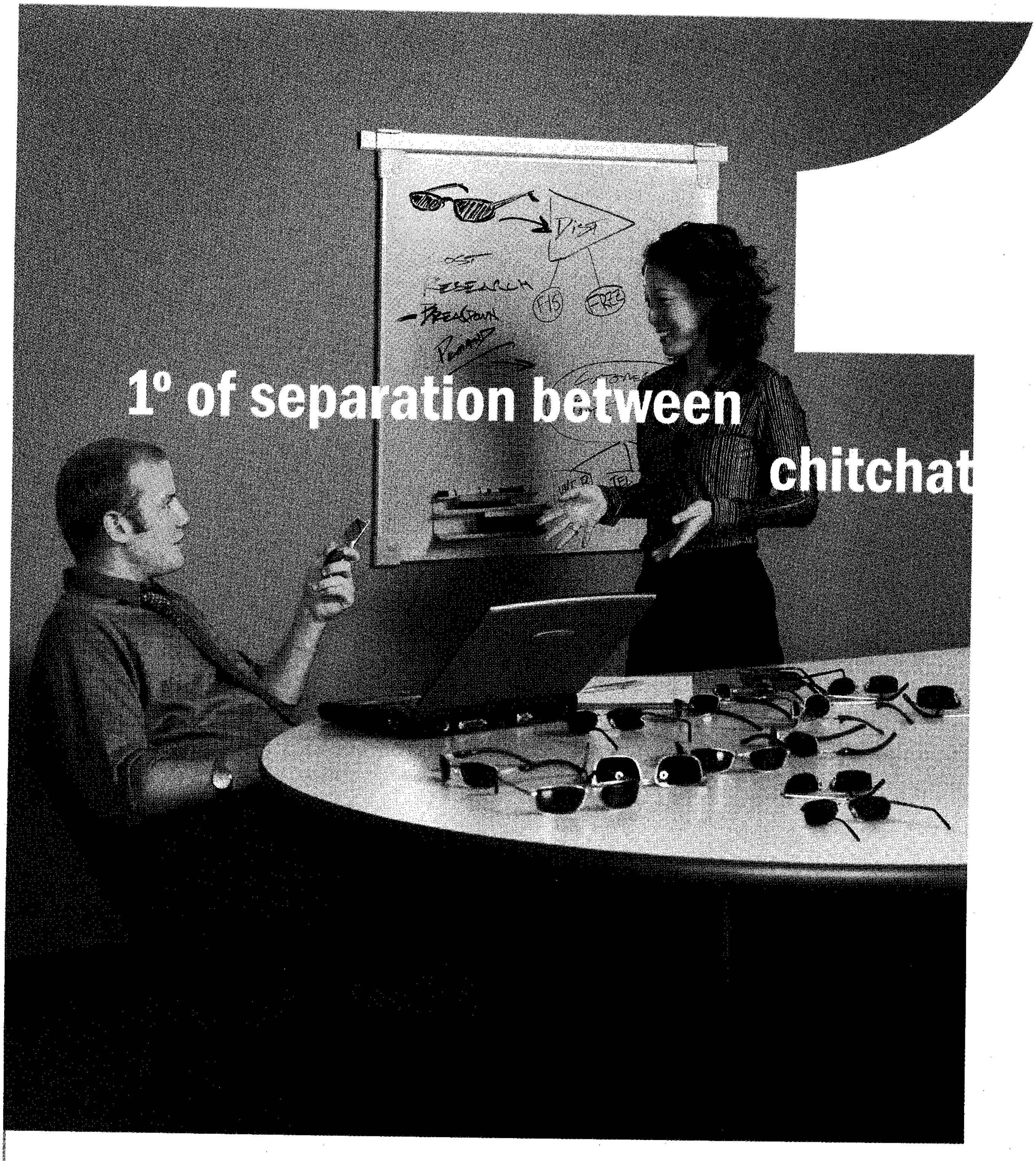

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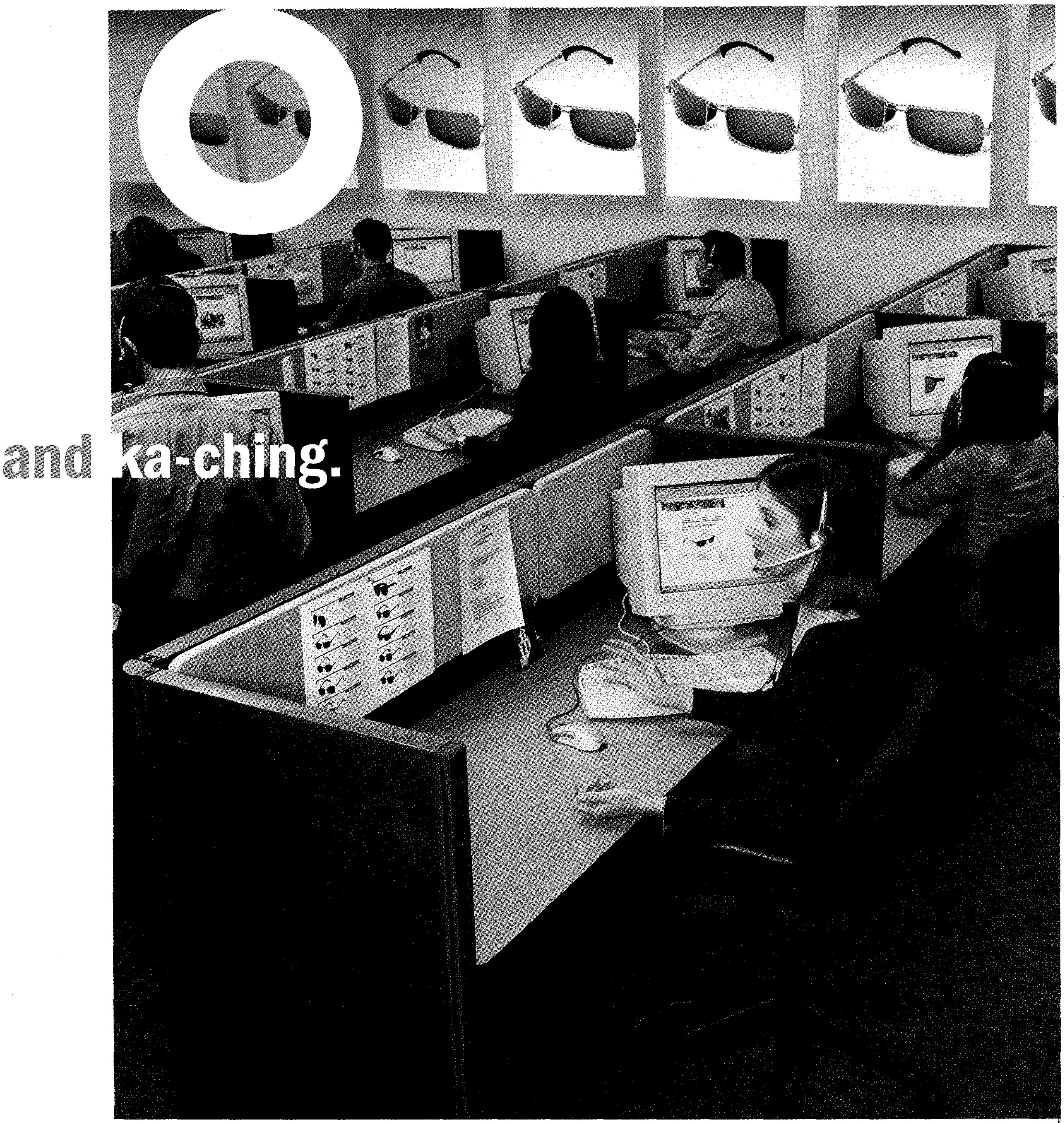
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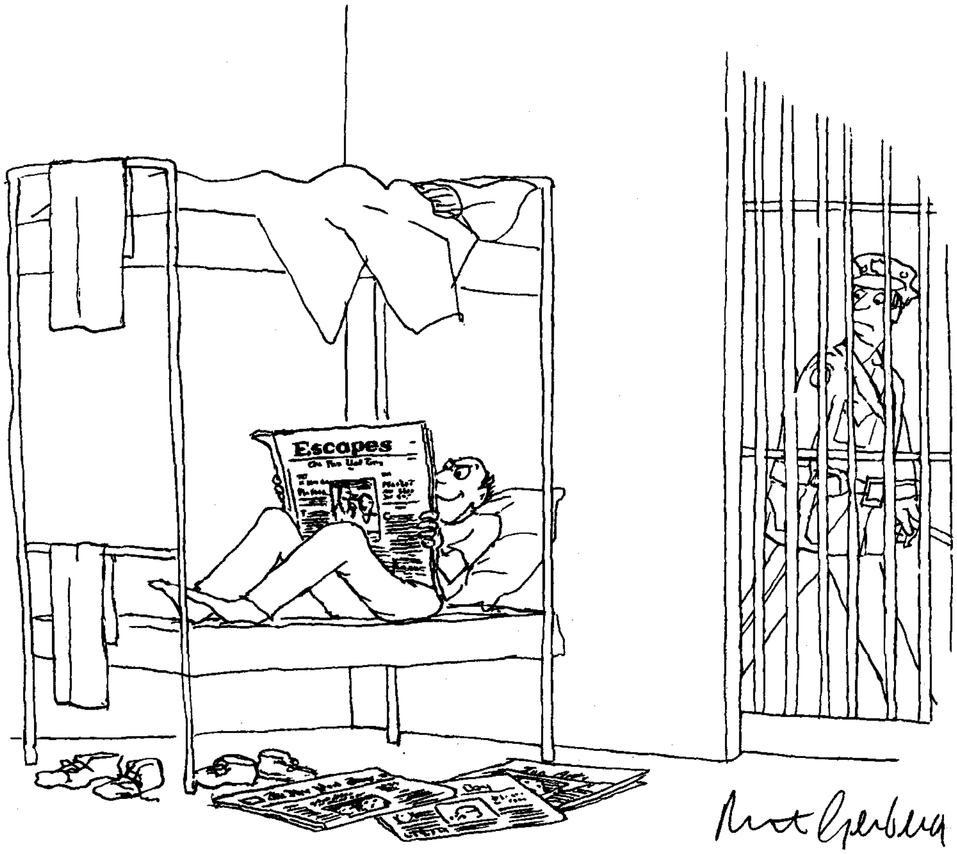

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Elizabeth Kolbert ("The Mogul Mayor," p. 138) writes about New York politics for the magazine.

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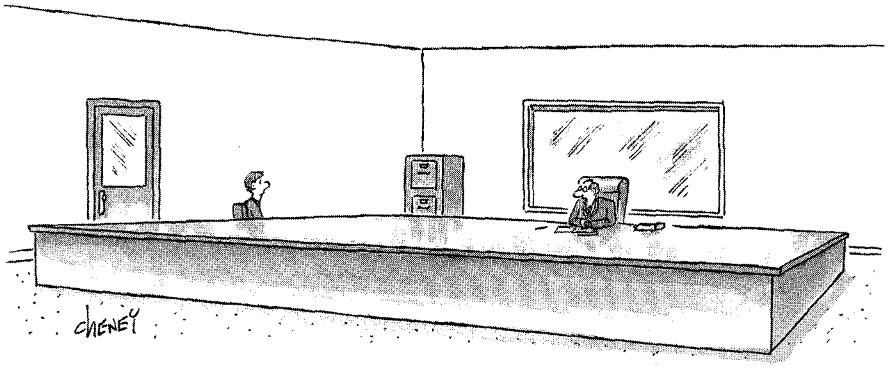

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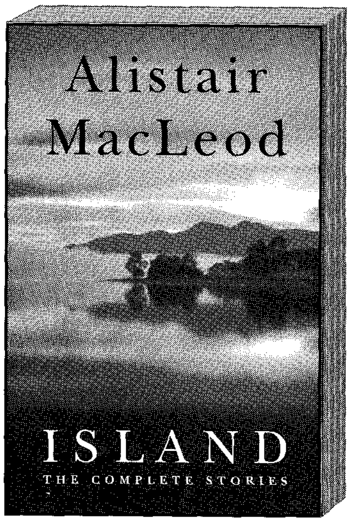

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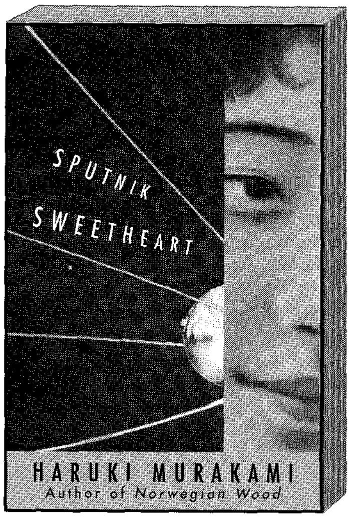

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SPEAKING FOR THE KURDS

As a Kurd who has had family members murdered by the Iraqi government, the basic story that Jeffrey Goldberg told—of Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons in a genocidal campaign against the Kurds—was not new to me ("The Great Terror," March 25th). My younger brother, Jabar, was arrested one day in 1990 and has been missing ever since. My pregnant sister's husband was snatched from their bed one night; his body was found in a ditch months later, along with that of my old physics teacher and many of our neighbors. My nieces, nephews, and other relatives are now scattered as refugees in Holland, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, part of the Kurdish diaspora. Yet I cried all over again when I read Goldberg's gripping account of the 1988 chemical attack on Halabja and of the mother who, after losing three of her sons, saw her youngest boy die.

I was outraged, however, by the comments of Benon Sevan, the United Nations official in charge of the oil-for-food program, who dismisses the Kurds' pressing needs by saying, "I don't know if they've ever had it so good," and "Nobody is innocent." Obviously, the Kurds have it better now that the bombs have mostly stopped falling, but does that mean they should be satisfied with inadequate health care, an infrastructure that hardly exists, and the condescension of U.N. bureaucrats? When Goldberg asked Sevan about the morality of allowing Saddam's regime to control the flow of food and medicine into Iraq, he retorted, "Don't talk about morals with me." But until the United States and the U.N. guarantee reasonable security and humane treatment for Kurdistan as a legitimate entity worthy of a minimum of international protection—until, in effect, they begin to talk morals—boatloads of hopeless Kurds will continue to risk their lives with smugglers in order to seek asylum elsewhere.

Jalal Jonroy
New York City

Leaving Saddam Hussein in power in 1991—three years after the mass murders described in Goldberg's article—was surely one of the most craven blunders in our recent political history. The Kurds may one day forgive us for our betrayals, but, if Goldberg's reporting is accurate, we should not be asking if the United States has the "right" to attack Saddam. We should instead recognize that the United States—or any nation with a commitment to justice—has a moral obligation to act. And to act without fear, without worry about the potential economic or political consequences. Continuing to ignore the crimes that have been carried out, and are still being carried out, against the Kurds would be a further blot on the world's conscience.

William S. Aronstein
Glendale, Ohio

In Saddam Hussein's Iraq, as Goldberg makes clear, the very physical existence of the Kurdish people has been threatened. But in Turkey, a NATO member and an American ally, the Kurds' cultural existence is being threatened as well. There are between fifteen and twenty million Kurds in Turkey, but they are prohibited by law from instruction in the Kurdish language in their schools. They may also be prosecuted for giving Kurdish names to their children and for celebrating holidays like Noruz, the Kurdish New Year. Turkey is experimenting openly with what Winston Churchill, in reference to the Irish, once condemned as killing a people by killing their language. If what matters to the international community is what is being done to the Kurds—and not whether the perpetrator is regarded as a friend or a foe—then Turkey should also be brought to task for its policies.

Nuri Akgul
New York City

•

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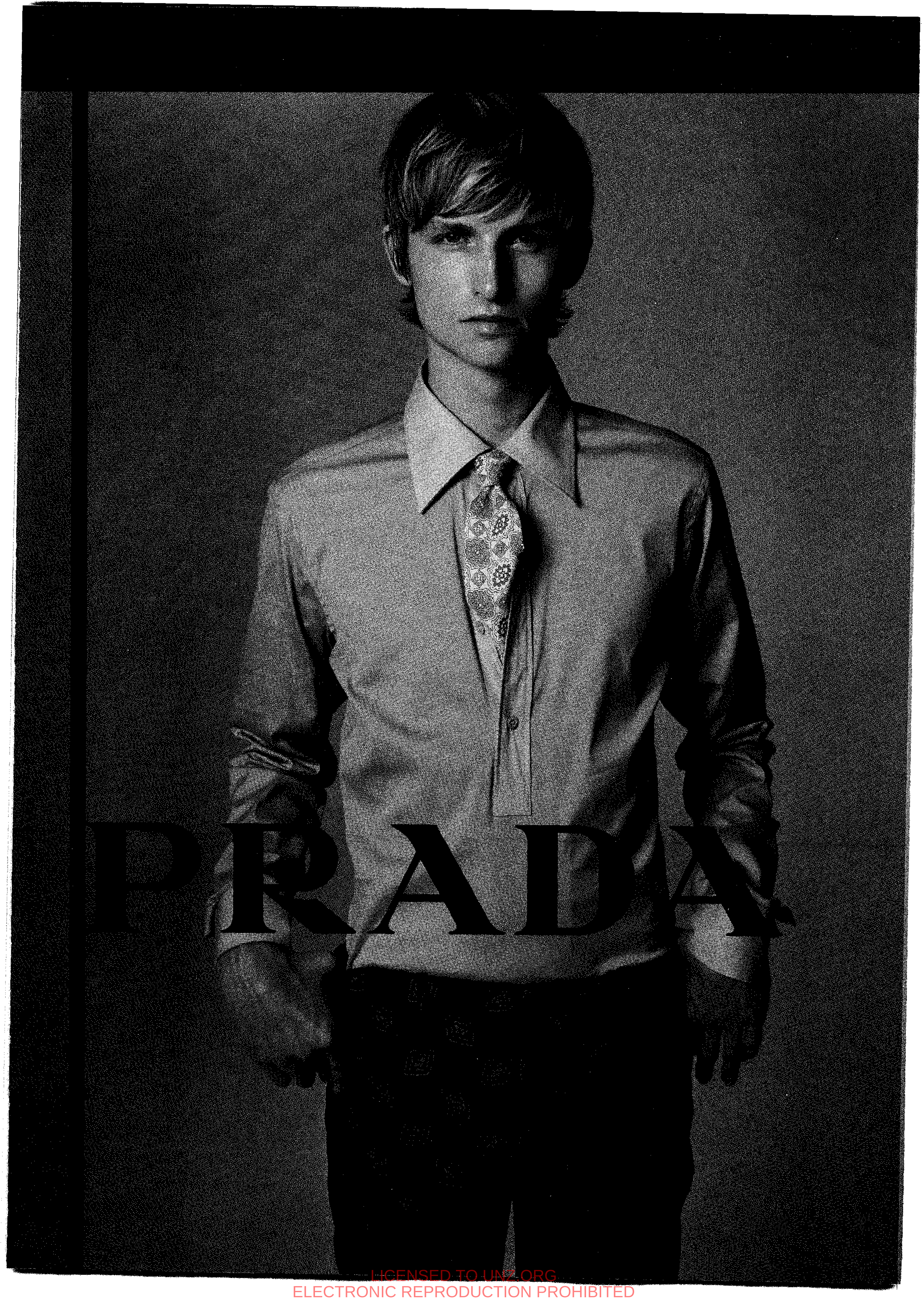
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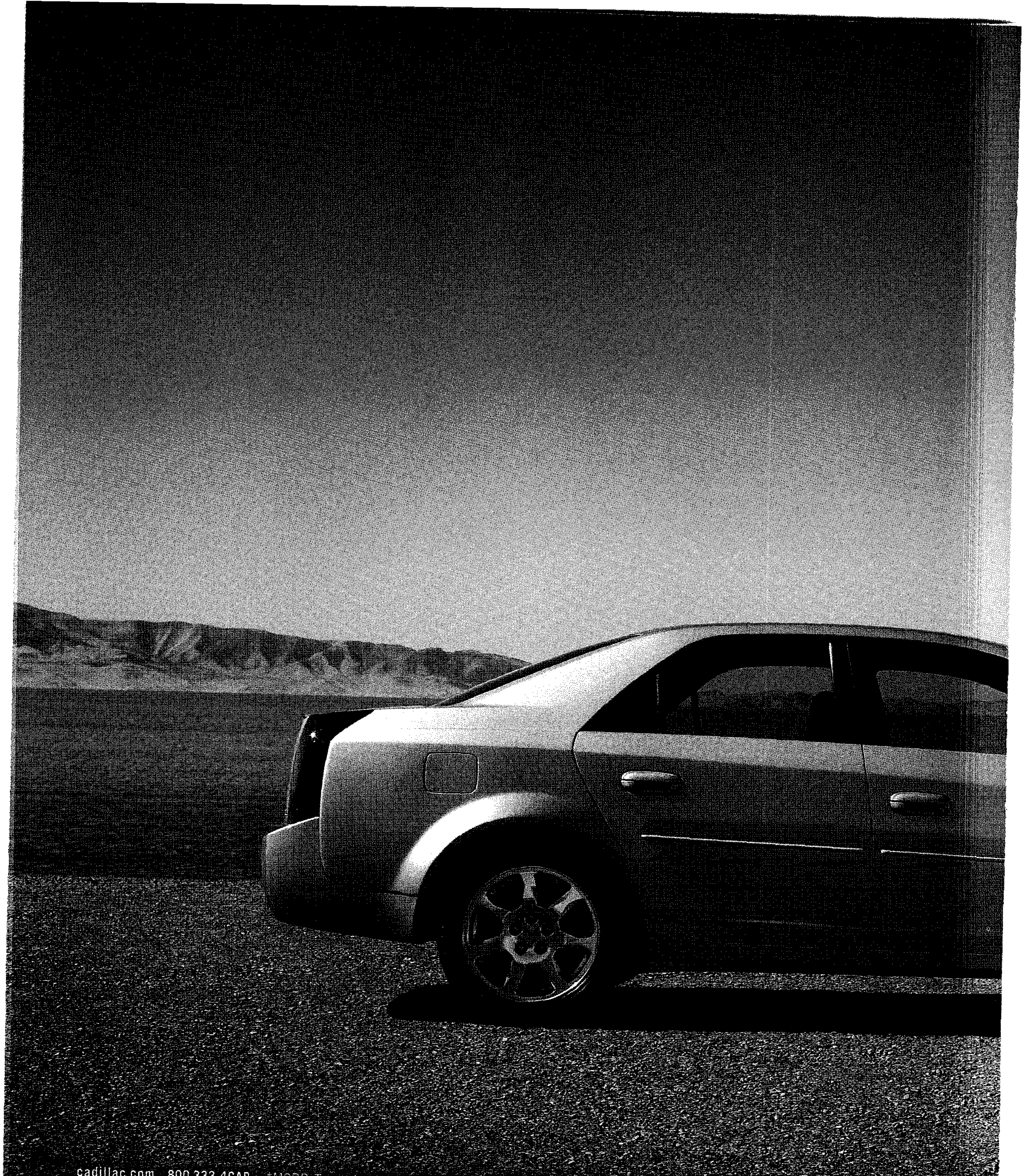

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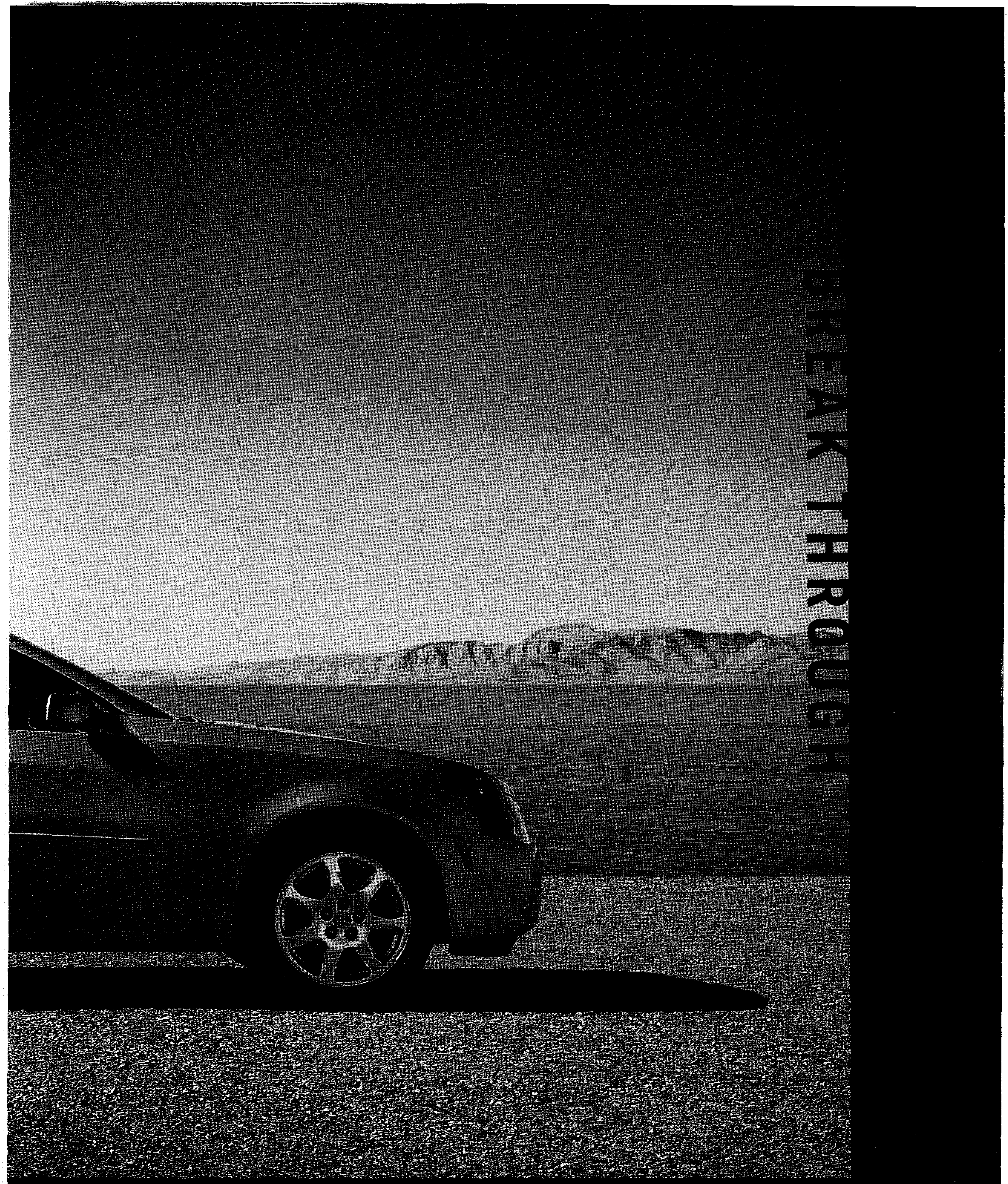

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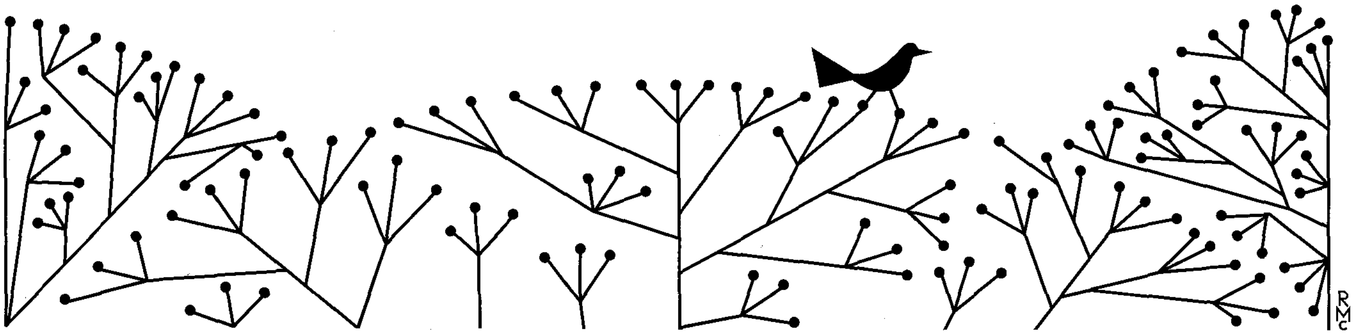

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. . . AND THEN YOU GO ON: AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE WORKS OF SAMUEL BECKETT
This one-man show, written and performed by Bob Jaffe, incorporates passages from thirteen Beckett works. Previews April 24-28. Opens April 29 at 8:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

BLUE SURGE
A drama by Rebecca Gilman ("Spinning Into Butter"), which revolves around the police interrogation of two prostitutes after a massage-parlor sting. Robert Falls is the director. In previews through April 20. Opens April 21 at 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

HOUSE AND GARDEN
A pair of conjoined plays, performed simultaneously on two stages, by Alan Ayckbourn. John Tillinger is the director. Previews begin April 26. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim's 1987 musical examination of fairy-tale archetypes stars Vanessa Williams and John McMartin. James Lapine, who wrote the book, is the director. In previews through April 27. Opens April 30 at 6:30. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE MAN WHO HAD ALL THE LUCK
Chris O'Donnell has the title role in a revival of Arthur Miller's 1940 drama, co-starring with Samantha Mathis. Scott Ellis is the director. Previews begin April 19. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

MORNING'S AT SEVEN
A Lincoln Center revival of Paul Osborn's 1939 back-yard drama. Daniel Sullivan is the director. In previews through April 20. Opens April 21 at 6:45. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE MURALS OF ROCKEFELLER CENTER
The painter Diego Rivera, John D. Rockefeller, and a controversial portrait of Lenin are at the center of this Irondale Ensemble Project drama. In previews through April 23. Opens April 24 at 8 and runs through May 18. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 718-488-9233.)

THE MYSTERY OF CHARLES DICKENS
Simon Callow portrays the author and forty-nine of his characters, in a one-man show written by Peter Ackroyd. Previews April 18-23. Opens April 24 at 6:45. (Belasco Theatre, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
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THE ODYSSEY
Derek Walcott's adaptation of Homer's epic poem, in a Willow Cabin Theatre Company production. Edward Berkeley is the director. Previews begin April 23. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

PRIVATE LIVES
The West End staging of Noel Coward's play, starring Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan, comes to Broadway. Howard Davies is the director. In previews April 19-27. Opens April 28 at 6. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The sleight-of-hand artist returns to New York with a new show, directed by David Mamet. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
The 1967 movie about a New York City flapper is the basis for a new musical by Dick Scanlan (book and new lyrics), the late Richard Morris (book), and Jeanine Tesori (new songs). Michael Mayer is the director. Two previews on April 17. Opens April 18 at 6:30. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

21 DOG YEARS: DOING TIME@AMAZON.COM
A solo show by Mike Daisy, in which he exposes life at the online giant during its early years. In previews. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

VIENNA LUSTHAUS (REVISITED)
The choreographer and director Martha Clarke, the playwright Charles L. Mee, and the composer Richard Peaslee's revised version of their 1986 collaboration, a multimedia exploration of Vienna in the early twentieth century. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ANDORRA
A Theatre for a New Audience revival of the late Swiss playwright Max Frisch's 1961 parable about anti-Semitism. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

THE CARPETBAGGER'S CHILDREN
Jean Stapleton, Hallie Foote, and Roberta Maxwell portray three daughters of a Union soldier, in a new play by Horton Foote. Michael Wilson is the director. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/10/01.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE CRUCIBLE
Arthur Miller's reimagining of the Salem witch-hunt of 1692, here in a masterly revival by Richard Eyre, is both a terrific melodramatic yarn that combines love interest and courtroom drama and a cunning allegory for the blacklisting delirium of the House Un-American Activities Committee; it is one of the only theatrical remnants of those craven years. Abigail Williams (the edgy, excellent Angela Bettis), an orphaned seventeen-year-old Puritan, has been seen dancing in the woods trying to cast a spell over the wife (the expert Laura Linney) of her thirty-five-year-old lover and former employer, John Proctor (Liam Neeson, who is a force of nature). Miller demonstrates the hysteric turning herself into an event in order to preserve a sense of goodness and to project her dark, violent, repressed feelings onto others. She becomes the psychological paradigm of the community. Murkiness—the crepuscular gloom of Paul Gallo's lighting—is this production's dominating atmosphere. Shards of light slant through the rough-hewn slabs of wood in Tim Hatley's brooding behemoth set, which contracts to convey the shadowy claustrophobia of Puritan habitation and expands to suggest the monumentality of the stockade. (3/18/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE DAZZLE
It's probably perfectly natural to worry that the sum of one's existence will end up being nothing more than an awful mess. In the true case of the infamous Collyer brothers, whose decaying bodies were discovered in 1947 buried beneath a lifetime collection of junk, that fear became a reality of phenomenal proportions. The terrific playwright Richard Greenberg has reimagined the brothers' fatal mistake (using love of the world's things, including knowledge, as a shield against the more painful love of humanity) with mixed results. His play is extremely long on longueurs (in the end, neurotics are actually pretty boring), but thanks to fine performances by the heretofore underrated Reg Rogers, as a concert pianist, and Peter Frechette, as his protective lawyer brother, it has numerous moments of funny-sad clarity. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100. Closes May 12.)

DOM JUAN
A new translation of Molière's play, written and directed by Alex Roe. (Metropolitan Playhouse, 220 E. 4th St. 995-5302. Closes May 5.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
In her extraordinary one-woman show (co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr), Stritchie, as Noel Coward called her, once and for all confirms her status as a living legend. As she sings songs and tells tales about the ups and downs

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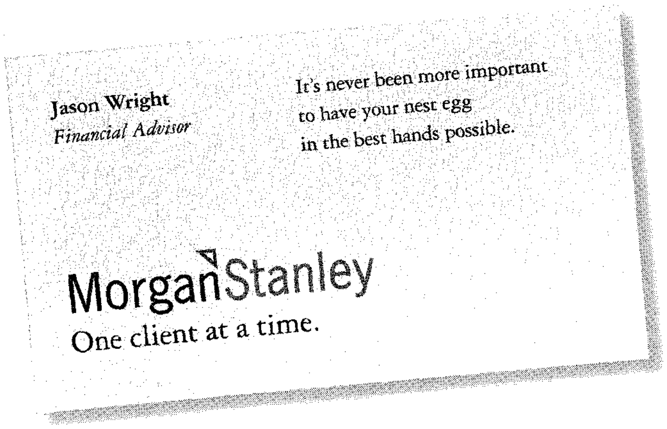
ROLL IT OVER. TO US.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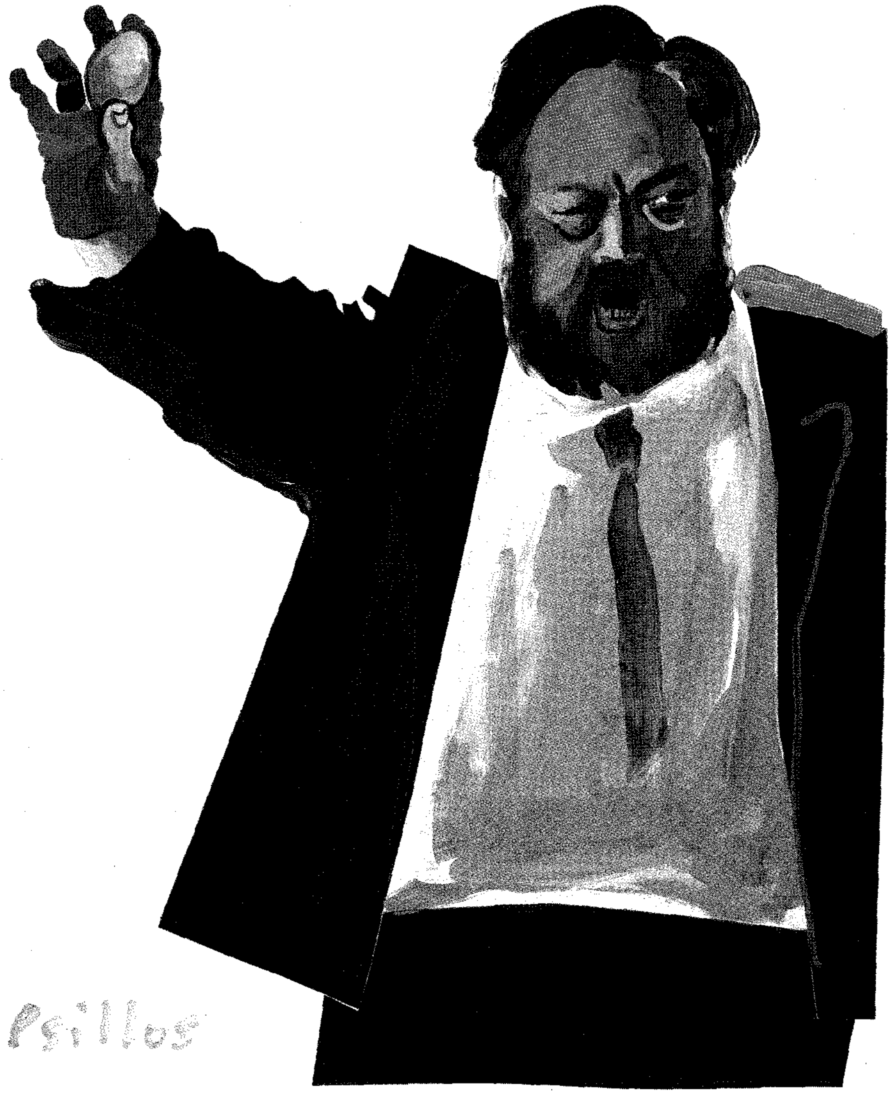
of her long life in the theatre, she ends up capturing more than a single lifetime; her show is the synthesis of so much that is rich and rewarding and heartbreaking about life on the stage. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

THE ELEPHANT MAN

Billy Crudup has the title role in a revival of Bernard Pomerance's 1979 drama, directed by Sean Mathias. Kate Burton and Rupert Graves are also in the cast. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



"Ricky Jay: On the Stem," starring the sleight-of-hand artist, at Second Stage.

FORTUNE'S FOOL

Turgenev's little-known 1848 play, set at a Russian country estate, has to do with the way that both meanings of the word "fortune"—fate and finances—hinge and impinge on each other. Alan Bates is a down-on-his-luck gentleman living on the estate, and Frank Langella is his wealthy, arrogant neighbor, accurately characterized as an "infamous, fatuous fop." (He could be the love child of Gore Vidal and Dame Edna.) Just as their characters represent the gamut of the negative qualities of the ruling class, Langella and Bates seem to use up all the acting possibilities in the play as they goad and react to each other; from the moment they first appear on the stage together, it becomes almost unnecessary for anyone else to be present, so completely do they dominate the evening. Directed by Arthur Penn, making his first Broadway foray in twenty years. (4/15/02) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?

Left to his own devices, without society's rules or the superego's tyrannical eye, homo sapiens would shtup mud. Or so Edward Albee contends in his ninety-minute anecdote about a happily married, successful architect who falls in love with a goat called Sylvia. It takes all of Albee's expertise to tease this joke into an evening; but it allows Mercedes Ruehl some hilarious moments of high dudgeon as she trashes the house and her husband for "cruising livestock." The sex happens offstage, alas; if Mr. Albee had put his special pleading for bestiality in front of the paying customers, they'd be getting something for their top dollar. David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GODFADDA WORKOUT

A one-man show written and performed by Seth Isler. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE GOLEM

Robert Prosky stars in H. Leivick's 1921 version of the legend of the Golem of Prague, in which a sixteenth-century rabbi defies God to protect his people from attack. Lawrence Sacharow is the director. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE

This pointless production, starring Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson, was a hit in London, but the flap must have gone out of its wings during the transatlantic journey. Turner's first scene with the young Benjamin Braddock (Jason Biggs, of "American Pie" fame), intended to pave the way for seduction, is endless and full of dead air, and it turns out to be an accurate indicator of things to come. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. Terry Johnson, who directed, adapted the novel and the screenplay, and we'll never understand why. (4/15/02) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

HELEN

Tony Kushner directs Ellen McLaughlin's modern interpretation of the plight of Helen of Troy. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes April 21.)

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

The Century Center's Ibsen series continues with the playwright's 1896 drama about a corrupt banker who has sacrificed love for money. (111 E. 15th St. 279-4200. Closes April 28.)

KILT

A young man travels to Scotland for his grandfather's funeral and secrets are revealed, in a play written by Jonathan Wilson and directed by Jack Hofsiss. (The Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 206-1515. Closes May 4.)

KISS SHOT

A musical comedy by Jim Neu and Neal Kirkwood, set in a futuristic film-noir-influenced Los Angeles. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

THE LAST FIVE YEARS

This new work by the composer Jason Robert Brown ("Parade") is not really a musical per se (it has no book to speak of); it's a song cycle of charming, often funny, but not terribly memorable tunes that trace the five-year relationship of a young New York City couple. The super-talented Norbert Leo Butz and Sherie René Scott do everything in their admirable power to bring the characters into sharp focus. But Brown has made the pair less than three-dimensional, and the audience knows from the outset that they're going to part, so there's not much here in the way of surprises. Daisy Prince is the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

MAMMA MIA!

This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon, connects the dots between the band's No. 1 singles. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

MARIA DEL BOSCO (SEX & RACING CARS: A SOUND OPERA)

The avant-garde playwright Richard Foreman's fiftieth play. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650. Closes April 27.)

METAMORPHOSES

In Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who has had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool, water is life; it calls up associations with the unconscious, the primordial ooze, birth, and sex. The elegant, surreal playfulness of the stage picture broadcasts the tone of Zimmerman's deft direction and her vernacular reinventions. It's fun and full of wonder. But Zimmerman's charming cartoons illustrate rather than dramatize psychic struggle. Because of her scenic prowess, Zimmerman pulls the show off without getting it quite right. The swimming pool, which is the show's gimmick, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

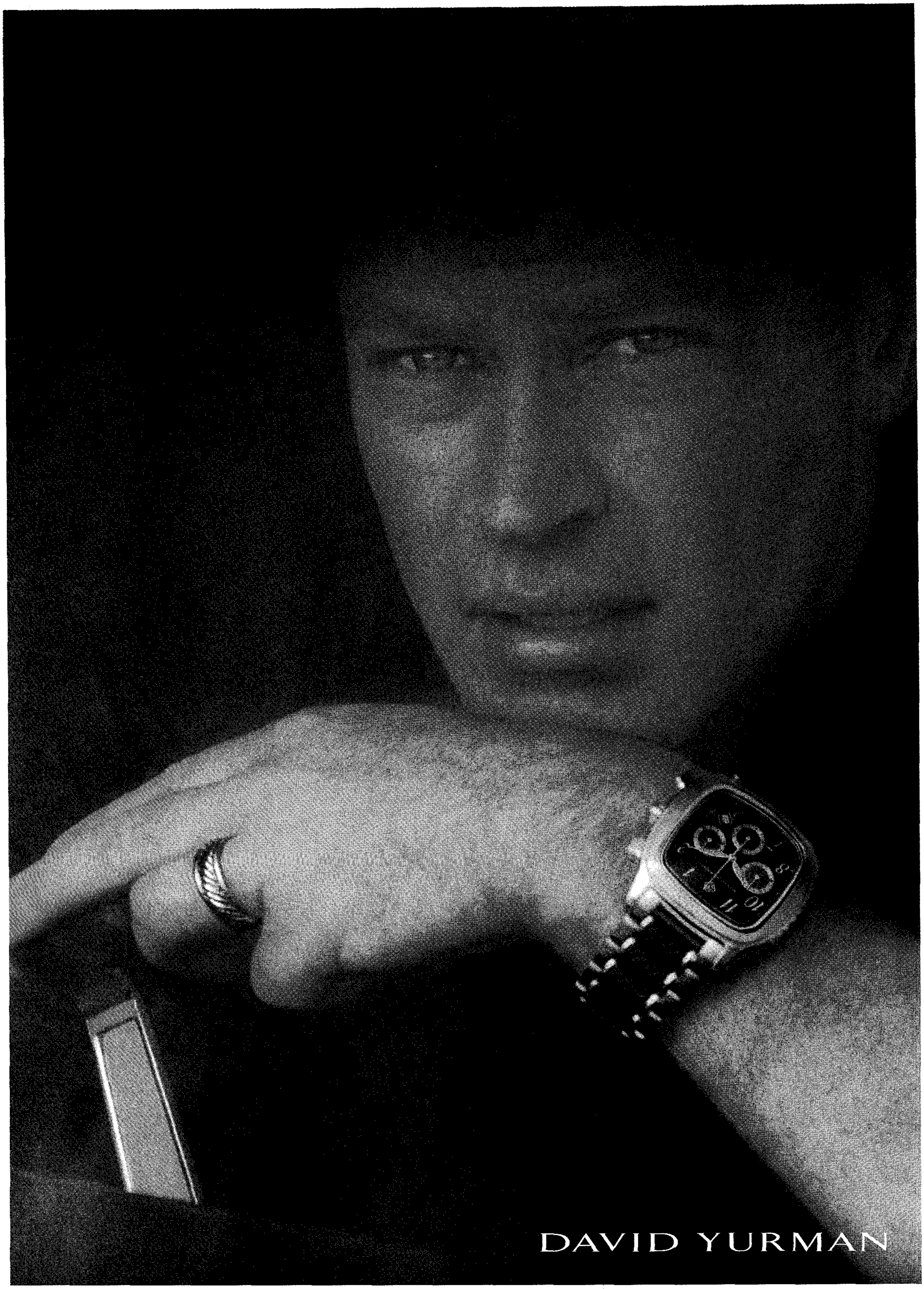
MISTER

Anthony Rapp portrays an inner-city schoolteacher who is accused of murder, in a new musical by Tony Vellela (book and lyrics) and Misha Piatigorsky (score). (Present Company Theatorium, 196-98 Stanton St. 420-8877.)

MR. GOLDWYN

As an exercise in hagiography, this play about the Hollywood mogul and legendary maestro of the malaprop, written by Marsha Lebby and John Lollos, makes A&E's "Biography" look edgy. The year is 1952. The movies are under siege from television; the industry is under investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, and, against all the odds, Samuel Goldwyn (Alan King), who at seventy-one is still a force to be reckoned with, is in the midst of pulling into a final cinematic inside straight with "Hans Christian Andersen." But, even in this tempest-tossed time, the

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS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writers manage to hit only still water. The show has no dramatic trajectory, no psychological insight, and no second act. (3/25/02) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

NECESSARY TARGETS
In Eve Ensler's new play, a New York psychiatrist (Shirley Knight) goes to Bosnia in 1995 to help treat the women at a refugee camp. She has arrived with all the wrong clothes and with little preparation (she thinks people in Bosnia speak Bosnian). At first, she is undone by the demands of the situation, and then is remade by what those demands bring out in her. Working with her is a tough young trauma counsellor (Catherine Kellner), who is writing a book about people in trouble spots around the world and is a one-dimensional stand-in for all coldhearted journalists who are interested only in the story, not in the people telling it. The play proceeds predictably, but Knight makes her character's transformation moving. (3/11/02) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's award-winning version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set, which immediately submerges us in a gorgeous world of folk innocence. But in the show's retranslation to its natural Broadway habitat, technique, which can make the show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. The issue of cultural chemistry comes into play: an emotional lopsidedness has become evident, particularly in the casting. Americans are a sort of mutant breed, whose optimism is a sure sign of emotional aberration. The English are constitutionally unable to fathom it. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

QED
Peter Parnell's play, starring Alan Alda as the physicist Richard Feynman, buzzes with life. Set in 1986—the year of the Challenger explosion, whose causes Feynman helped to investigate—"QED" takes us through an afternoon and evening in Feynman's office at Caltech, where he talks about such subjects as photons, drumming, the Manhattan Project, cancer, and "South Pacific." Alda's performance, which makes much use of that scrunchy-eyed smile of his, is one of utter charm. Sundays and Mondays only. (11/26/01) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

SMELL OF THE KILL
Michele Lowe's comedy involves three wives, their three unloving husbands, and a meat locker. Christopher Ashley is the director. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SURVIVING GRACE
A play by Trish Vradenburg, about a fraught mother-and-daughter relationship. Illeana Douglas and Doris Belack star. Jack Hofsiss directs. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-7171.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
This new musical, adapted from the excellent Clifford Odets–Ernest Lehman movie (1957) by a high-powered artistic team headed by the director Nicholas Hytner, is pitched at a level of ambition comparable to its subject's. The notion of New York as a playground was propagated by Broadway's gossip columnists, and especially by Walter Winchell, whose insatiable, driven personality makes him perfect material for the Broadway musical and who was the inspiration for the character J. J. Hunsecker (played by the expert John Lithgow). At first glance, "Sweet Smell" seems to have got it right. Bob Crowley's behemoth gray skyscrapers loom over the stage, turning it into a kind of concrete canyon that resounds with the echo of rumor. John Guare, who wrote the book, has a clear bead on the material's potent mixture of comic and craven. Unfortunately, the wit of the book is not sustained in Marvin Hamlisch's soft, undistinguished score and Craig Carnelia's flat lyrics. (3/25/02) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SWIMMING WITH WATERMELONS
A musical, performed by four women, about a romance in occupied Japan between a G.I. and a Japanese woman. The songs are standards of the era, and the staging niftily combines elements of Broadway and traditional Japanese theatre; the result is both truly funny and deeply moving. The show was written and directed by Diane Paulus and Randy Weiner and is based on the true story of Ms. Paulus's parents. But instead of sappiness, the audience gets a clear-eyed look at the prejudice such a couple might have faced, together with a clearly justified belief in the power of true love to overcome all—in the best "Guys and Dolls" fashion. Several of the roles are recognizable types, but the cast—three of whom play two roles apiece (a testament to the ingenuity of the costume designer, Ilona Somogyi)—makes all of the characters fully human as well. It's a delight, beginning to end. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes April 21.)

TALK
Carl Hancock Rux's play is just that: talk, by a fictional panel, on the meaning of a fictional avant-garde novelist and playwright's work and life. The evening is too long, but Mr. Rux has some interesting angles on the intersection of art, commercialization, and history, and his language is rich and smart, whether he's creating a dead-on parody of modern academic theorizing or letting an old-time TV host gas on about fame in New York in the fifties. In the end, the tremendous cast (particularly John Seitz as the TV host and Reg E. Cathey as a Civil Rights-era activist) in combination with Marion McClinton's fierce and funny direction makes the investment of time worth it far more often than not. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 800-965-4827. Closes April 28.)

The Welsh outfit the Super Furry Animals, at Irving Plaza (see Night Life).

MICHAEL WELDON

3 DARK TALES
The international company Theatre O's "tragicomedy in three movements." (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play has moved to Broadway, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE UNDERPANTS
Has there ever been a more promising title for a play? After all, no other garment is so close to the facts and the concomitant follies of life. Steve Martin has adapted Carl Sternheim's satirical 1911 play (called "Die Hose" in German), which deals with the consquences of an embarrassing event: a woman's underpants fall down in public, while she is watching a royal parade. The woman's husband (Byron Jennings), a respectable government clerk, is mortified, but the mishap has, if anything, newly awakened his wife (Cheryl Lynn Bowers) to life's possibilities, which include the several men who show up wanting to rent a room from them. The production suffers somewhat from Barry Edelstein's oppressively noisy direction, but Martin's work is inspired; he brings out the play's middle-class absurdities and adds some wise nonsense of his own. (4/15/02) (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

WHAT THE HELL'S YOUR PROBLEM: AN EVENING WITH DR. BOB NATHELSON
Tom Noonan's latest play, about a television self-help guru whose books include "You Made Your Parents Hate You." (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 206-1515. Closes April 20.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

NOISES OFF
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.
THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NATIONAL BALLET OF SPAIN
The company does not do ballet, the artistic director Elvira Andrés says. To explain what it does do, she asks, "Have you ever had Spanish ham?" The thirty-six dancers and many musicians offer robust folk dances; campy pop-contemporary flamenco numbers for squads of men and women; traditional flamenco solos in the manner of the limpid, elegant Manolete or the mid-century staccato legend Estampió; and ensemble pieces with castanets, symphonic scores, and delicate footwork. It's Spanish dance in all its spicy variety. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. April 18-20 at 8 and April 21 at 2.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH
April 17, April 25, April 27, and April 30 at 8: "Ah Scarlatti," "Ion," "Mending," and "Skandia." ♦ April 18 and April 20 at 8: "Straw Hearts," "Behold the Man," and "Doo Dah Day." ♦ April 19 and April 24 at 8: "Contra Pose," "Yo Johann," "Lincoln Portrait," and "Pacific Dances." ♦ April 20 at 2, a family matinée: "Meshugana Dances," "Sleep Study," "3 Commedia Dances," and "Apple Pie." ♦ April 21 and April 28 at 2: "Contra Pose," "Pacific Dances," and "The Jig Is Up." ♦ April 26 at 8: "Clave," "Pianola," "At Midnight," and "Paper Tiger." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through May 5.)

NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE
The troupe's six sensual, precise, and spirited women hail from a village outside of Bangalore, in southern India, dedicated wholly to the study of Indian classical dance. Their particular form—the curvaceous, storytelling Odissi—began some two thousand years ago in the inner sanctum of Hindu temples, where the only audience for the Brahman maiden dancers was the gods. Even now, the dancers are "vehicles of the divine," the artistic director Surupa Sen says, devoting twelve-hour days for six years to learning the foot positions, hand gestures, and eye movements necessary for dancing the elaborate Hindu myths. This show, with live music composed for the occasion, is evenly divided between traditional dances and the company's first, unusually successful foray into experimentation, where they stretch the ancient idiom to accommodate new versions of the old stories. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 545-7536. April 20 at 8 and April 21 at 7.)

WASHINGTON BALLET
This is fast becoming the year of folksy circle dances in ballet and modern dance. In "Journey Home," by the artistic director Septime Webre, not only does the ensemble hold hands around the stage, but the whole suite of dances forms a circle of sorts. The hero—a prancing Odysseus—finds home only by travelling to faraway lands. But the community feeling in the ballet's wholesome subject and in its live accompaniment, by the righteous all-woman a-cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, is counterbalanced by the pleasing plainness of the choreography, rare in the ballet world of late. Twyla Tharp's "Brief Fling" and Ben Stevenson's "Three Preludes" complete the program. (Whitman Theatre, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. April 20 at 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO

STRIP HOUSE
13 E. 12th St. (328-0000)—Flesh, in variously enticing permutations, is the come-on at this coyly named take on the good old American steak house. For lovers of those larger-than-life pachyderms known as opera singers, the bordello-red walls are lined with faded photographs of legendary and not so legendary divas and their leading men—relics of the restaurant's former identity as Asti, a longtime tourist destination that featured singing waiters who knew the words to "La donna è mobile." For nostalgists of the lost art of slow undressing in a spotlight, there are glossies of statuesque ecdysiasts who once top-lined the burlesque circuit with names like Blaze, Dawn, and Gypsy Rose. And for people whose idea of sensual bliss peaks at the prospect of sinking their teeth into slabs of prime beef, there is an array of classic cuts, from strip and chop to flank and filet.

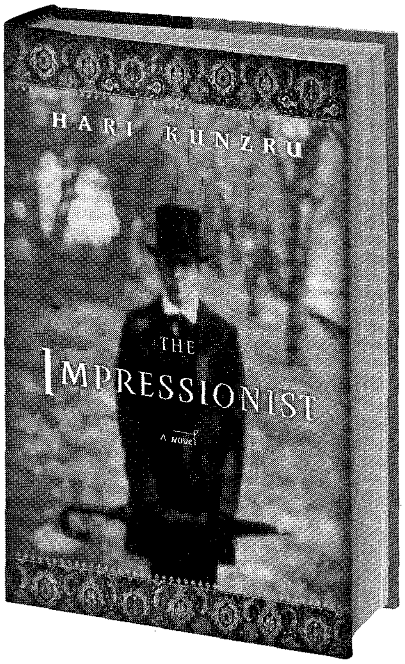
The background music can get aggressively loud, and the waiters sometimes seem to prefer talking to each other rather than to the customers. But there is an attentively steady hand in the kitchen, which offers a couple of surprises as well as some thoughtful alternatives for the non-carnivores. The most interesting appetizer is a short-rib "flan" that delivers the braised meat in a wrap of endive, with roasted garlic, chanterelles, and a port sauce. Entrées include a sesame-crusted yellowfin tuna in a green peppercorn sauce, and fresh linguine tossed with duck confit, roasted corn, and thyme. Among the desserts, the most memorable is a spectacularly messy profiterole, with two kinds of chocolate ice cream, a lava flow of hot-fudge sauce, and a raspberry coulis.

When it comes to the steak, Strip House can more than hold its own against the competition. The strips and their more marbled cousins arrive perfectly charred, crusted, and seasoned, and, for a little glamour, the waiter will bring boats of Stilton, Bordelaise, and béarnaise sauces. As for the sides, this steak house may be in a class by itself. Truffles take creamed spinach into a whole new comfort zone. And a tower of creamy potatoes comes encased in a golden crust that could only have been achieved by deep-frying the whole thing in goose fat. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner; weekends for dinner only. Entrées $22-$37.)

—*Charles Michener*

"LUCINDA CHILDS: SOLOS"
The minimalist presents three solos. The first, "Dance #4," from 1979, features a Philip Glass score and a film by Sol LeWitt. "Description (of a Description)," from 2000, is set to a text by Susan Sontag. The final work, "Underwater," was created in collaboration with Glass and Robert Wilson. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. April 17-20 at 8.)

MARK JARECKE DANCE
The choreographer offers three works, "Faraway Nearsighted," inspired partly by the censorship his brother endured as a correspondent during the Gulf War, "SubDermal," a solo for Steffany George, and "Synesthesia," in homage to Mark Rothko. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 18-21 at 8:30.)



"A novel of such remarkable eloquence and imagination that it is difficult to believe it is his first."*

"Kunzru...weaves a narrative with **just the right blend of misadventure, humor, and humiliation."** —*GQ*

"Maniacally inventive–a fantastical funhouse of a novel." —*Vogue*

"Like Zadie Smith, who shares his perceptive irony, Kunzru is of a generation that looks back from the 21st century...in cool mockery." —*The Guardian* (UK)

"Impressive...Seamlessly composed, vividly exotic." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Dazzling...Rollicking... As a result of [Kunzru's] evocative details and his highly polished prose, *The Impressionist* is a remarkably textured, often funny novel." —*BookPage*

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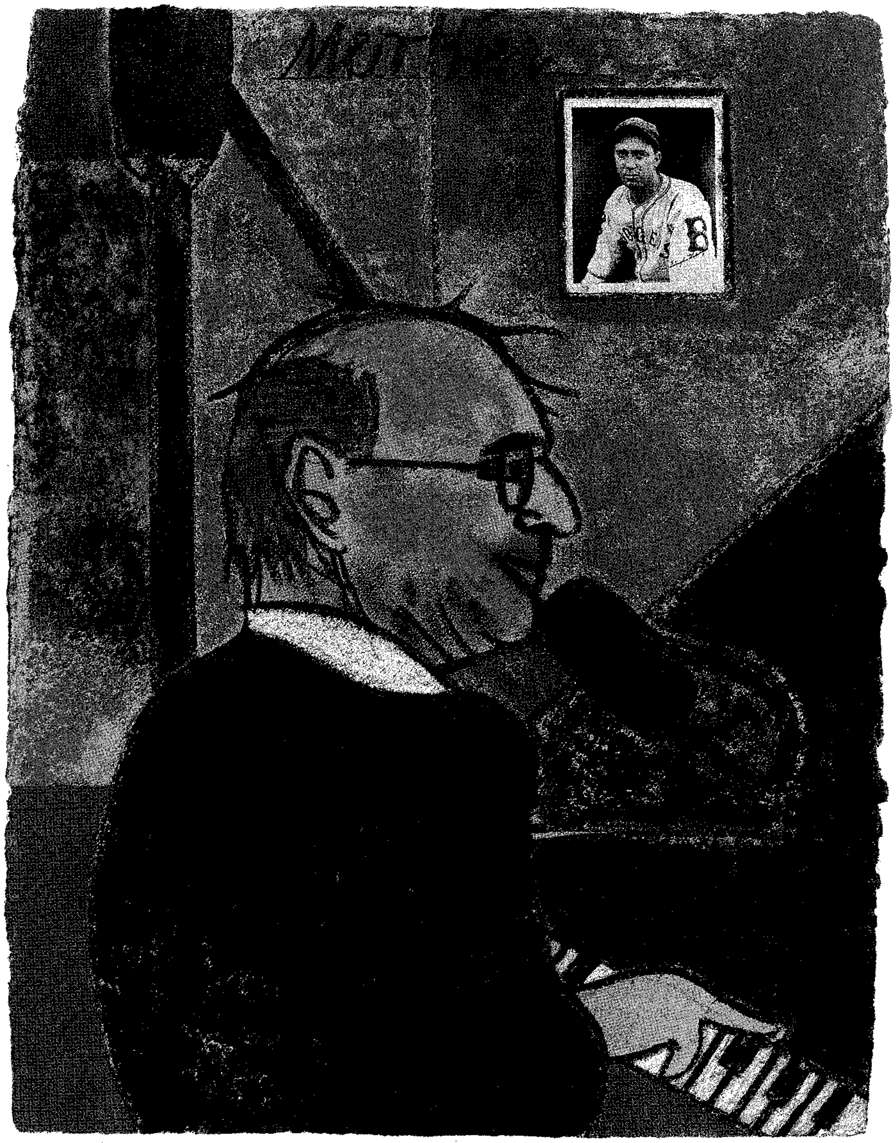
"AFTER, KANSAS"
The choreographer Tanya Gagné teams with many current and former members of Sarah East Johnson's Lava (Johnson, Natalie Agee, Adrienne Truscott) and five other dancers in a vaudevillian "Wizard of Oz"-like saga about saving performance art from an evil media wizard. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 18-21 at 8:30.)

AKIRA KASAI
The Butoh dancer and founder of Tenshi Kan (House of Angels), a Tokyo institute for Butoh and esoteric studies, performs the solo "Pollen Revolution," incorporating the un-Butoh-like leaps and whirls that have come from his study at Else Klink's Stuttgart Eurythmeum. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015. April 25-27 at 8.)



The witty and poignant songwriter Dave Frishberg, at the Algonquin.

RICHARD MERKIN

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

CHEIKH LÔ
The West African singer belongs to the Baye Fall, a proselytizing division of the Senegalese Sufi Islamic sect known as the Mouride, and he's distinguished by his wild dreadlocks (as required by the Baye Fall) and by his prodigious talent for taking a wide variety of styles—Cuban rhythms, American funk, and Jamaican reggae, along with his native *mbalax*, to name but a few—and creating new and entirely moving music. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. April 18 at 9.)

JAZZ AT THE PENTHOUSE
Jeff (Tain) Watts is a rock-'em-sock-'em drummer who answers to an extroverted muse. He's powered the bands of both Wynton and Branford Marsalis, and continues to be the most in-demand percussionist of his generation. His own ensemble includes the guitarist Paul Bollenbeck and the saxophonist John Benitez. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. April 18-20 at 8.)

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES
Despite having called it quits in 1996 to protest the reunion of their erstwhile peers the Sex Pistols, these British punk progenitors have put their spooky war paint and spiky wigs back on. They rose from the same mid-seventies London maelstrom that gave the world the Pistols (the Banshees' first drummer was, in fact, Sid Vicious), but the self-styled femme fatale Siouxsie Sioux (née Susan Dallion) and her cohorts went on to experiment with more sophisticated genres, and Siouxsie's dark persona helped fashion the goth movement. (Roseland. April 19 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
April 19 at 8: The singer and dancer **Toto La Momposina,** who comes from a family of musicians on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, is an entrancing ambassador of the *cumbia*, the irrepressible percussion-based music of that corner of her homeland. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St.) ♦ April 25 at 8: The venerable yet still venturous avant-garde jazz saxophonist **Oliver Lake,** backed by a string quartet, shares the bill with the flutist **Jacqueline Martelle.** (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St.) ♦ April 27 at 8: **Marcel Khalife,** a Lebanese master of the fretless lute known as the oud, makes a rare New York appearance. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) ♦ April 28 at 7: The Moroccan native, Israeli cantor, and relentless countertenor **Emil Zrihan** performs sacred and secular songs of Andalusia and North Africa. (Symphony Space.) For more information about all the shows, call 545-7536.

TROY CARRIER AND THE ZYDECO CREW
The ebullient sounds and "until" spirit (as in the regional usage of the word: "the band plays from eight until . . .") of Lawtell, Louisiana. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, between 12th and 13th Sts. For more information, call 685-7597. April 21 at 7:30.)

"SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR"
The Duke Ellington Society presents the première of long-lost Billy Strayhorn compositions that were recently discovered by the Dutch musicologist Walter van de Leur. The saxophonist Michael Hashim, the drummer Kenny Washington, and the trombonist Art Baron are among those doing the honors. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. For more information, call 675-7477. April 27 at 9.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 18: The clear-voiced and clear-eyed singer-songwriter **Dar Williams.** April 25-26: On her latest album, "Songs in Red and Gray," the wispy neo-folk singer **Suzanne Vega** returns to the sparse, distinctive sound that brought her fame with the 1987 hit "Luka."

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—April 20: **Beulah** play the sunny pop of their native California, complete with horn sections and string arrangements. The guitar chords ring brightly, and the vocal harmonies are precise, but, since this is an indie band, the songs have titles such as "What Will You Do When Your Suntan Fades?" and "A Good Man Is Easy to Kill." April 25-26: The alternative-country heroes turned underground pop avatars **Wilco** roll into town with songs from their finally released new album, "Yankee Hotel Foxtrot," which recently found a home on the forward-looking Nonesuch label. With **Neal Michael Hagerty,** formerly of Royal Trux.

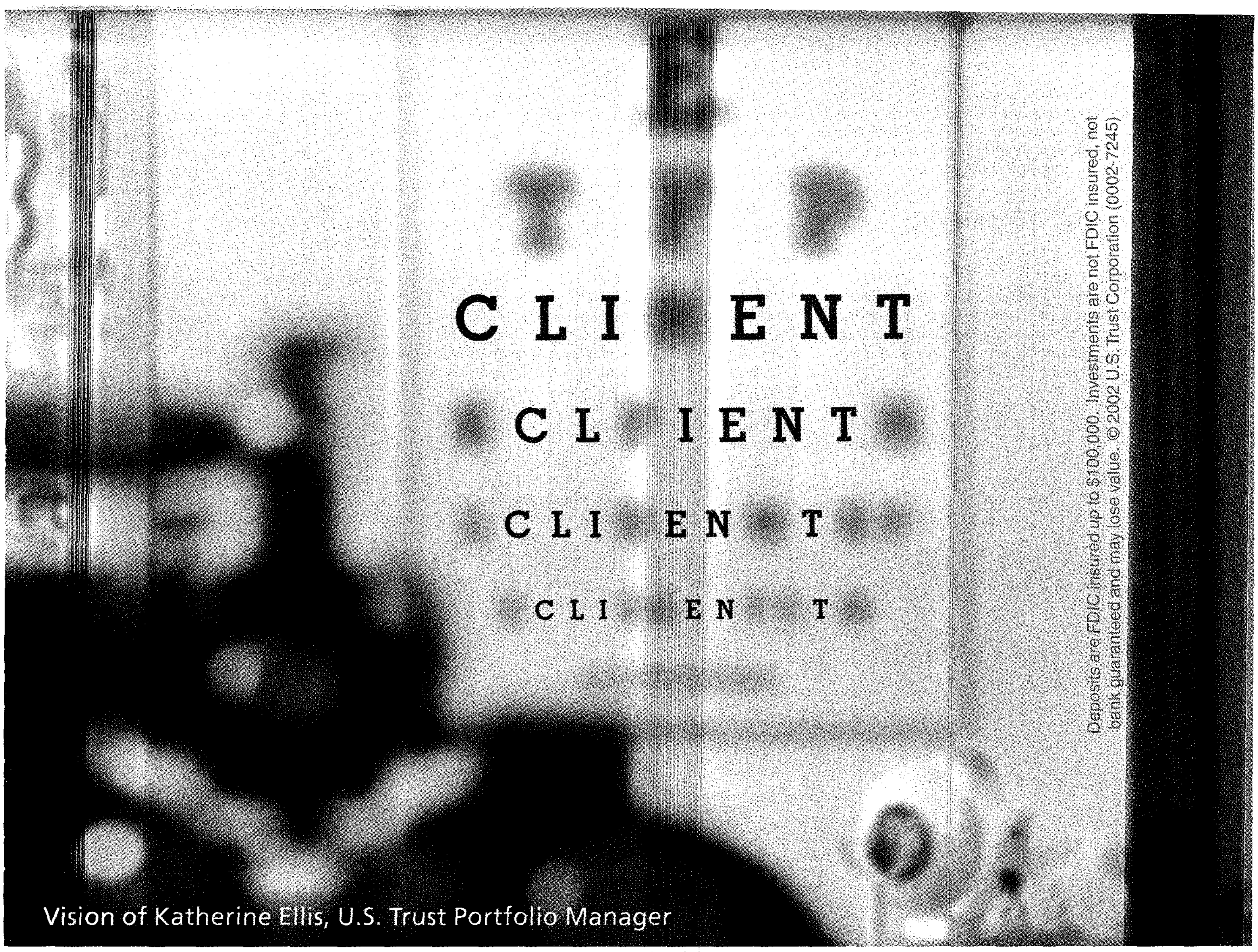
BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—April 26: **Joe Pernice,** here in a solo departure from his roots-rock group the Pernice Brothers, possesses one of the most soaring voices to be heard in a smoky club. Occasionally tender and wistful, it favors a depressing but literate world view.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 24: The fiercely talented Welsh pop group **Super Furry Animals** came to prominence in England, in the mid-nineties. Their pastiche of musical styles occasionally borders on musical comedy, but as their new album, "Rings Around the World," shows, the Animals are starting to play it straight. While the band's stunts no longer include arriving at festivals in a tank, as they did in the summer of 1996, they're still eccentric enough to produce songs that include recordings of prank calls and sincere reflections on the Lewinsky affair. April 26: The solid, beef-stew-seasoned, good-ol'-boy voice of **Greg Brown.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 24: Born in Wales, raised in Brittany, and currently living in New York City and Dublin, **Katell Keineg** has a voice with as wide a range as her background—a beautiful and wild soprano.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—April 26: The sublime Brazilian guitarist **Vinicius Cantuaria.**

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—April 22: The very loud and hairy **Hellacopters** come from the unlikely



Vision of Katherine Ellis, U.S. Trust Portfolio Manager

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musical hotbed of Sweden, delivering eardrum-shredding garage rock à la the MC5 and the Stooges with the two-fisted passion of vintage Motörhead. What they lack in originality they more than compensate for in cartoonish enthusiasm.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through April 29: If **Dave Frishberg** didn't write such clever songs he'd be better known as a pianist (his sly, offhand piano turns are as sharp as his wit). But then we wouldn't have such gems as "My Attorney Bernie," "Van Lingle Mungo" (a sports paean with lyrics comprised of vintage baseball players' names), or "Peel Me a Grape," his not quite feminist anthem, which is presumably bringing him handsome royalties thanks to Diana Krall.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 21: **Elvin Jones** sometimes seems more octopus than man—he's a brilliant drummer who can produce multirhythmic currents dizzying in their velocity and complexity. April 23-28: If anyone can restore relations between Cuba and the U.S., it's the pianist **Chucho Valdes.** Hear this awe-inspiring composite of Art Tatum, Cecil Taylor, Bill Evans, and countless less familiar, Cuban virtuosos live once at a New York jazz club and you'll do anything you can to make sure he's permitted to return on a regular basis.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through April 20: The singer **Lillias White,** who walked off with a Tony and a slew of other prestigious theatre awards in 1997 for her star turn in "The Life," was most recently heard in the concert version and subsequent recording of "Dreamgirls." For this engagement, the natural performer presents a program of Broadway and jazz standards, backed by the blue-chip support of the pianist James Williams, the guitarist Phil Hamilton, the bassist Ron Carter, and the drummer Grady Tate.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—April 23-28: The **Ahmad Jamal** trio. Instead of mellowing with time, Jamal gets more eccentric. A charming minimalist back in the fifties, the pianist has metamorphosed into a verbose extrovert with his own game plan of stop-and-start rhythms, mood-swing digressions, and catch-me-if-you-can shenanigans with his sidemen. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through April 21: The **Donald Harrison** quartet. Harrison's days as a straitlaced neoconservative are long over. The New Orleans-born jazz saxophonist is now happy mixing and matching jazz with Mardi Gras Indian chants, Meters-style funk, and contemporary hip-hop. But when the mood strikes, he can still race a bebop tune into a sweat. April 23-28: The **Masters of Groove** have the credentials to back up the bravado of their name—the booting tenor saxophonist **Pee Wee Ellis** was a linchpin in James Brown's *über*-funk bands of the seventies, **Ruben Wilson** is an old-school practitioner of the Hammond organ, the legendary **Bernard (Pretty) Purdie** may have more hit records to his credit then any other session drummer, and the guitarist **Grant Green, Jr.,** has the groove in his genes thanks to his fretman father, Grant Green. Dining.

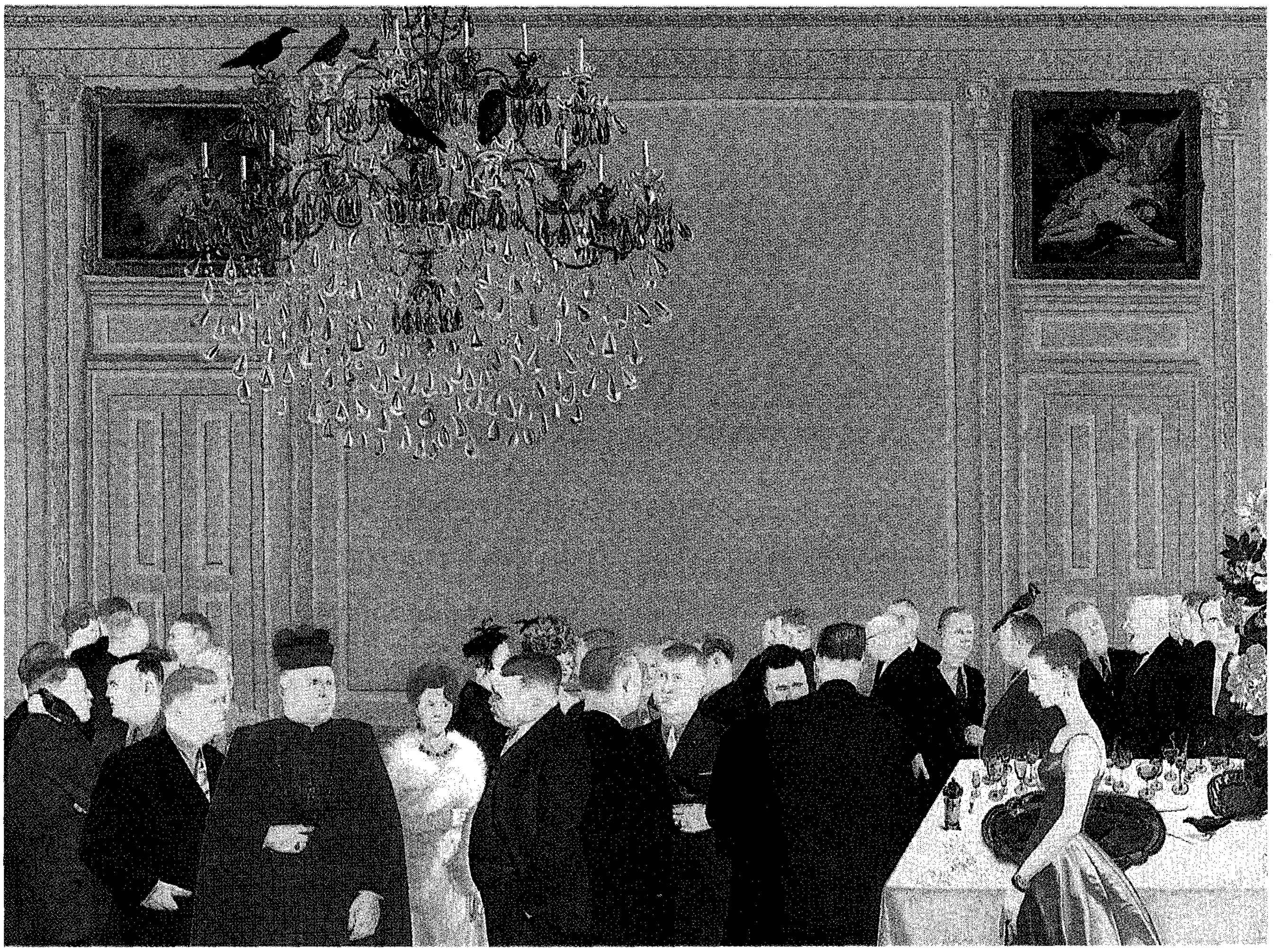
KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—An early member of the ECM piano stable of the seventies that included Keith Jarrett and Paul Bley, **Art Lande** (here with his trio on April 22) is an introspective yet incisive stylist too little heard in these parts.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—Bebop piano rules at the end of this month as **Larry Willis,** recently heard with Roy Hargrove, brings in his quartet on the 19th and 20th. **Mike LeDonne's** trio benefits from the elegant heft of superbassist **Ron Carter** on the 26th and 27th.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through April 21: The **Barry Harris** trio. Where most bop pianists approach their keyboard like Secretariat on a good day, Harris is a seducer, easing into his runs with a satin touch, always placing melody before rampant virtuosity. April 23-May 1: The **Lou Donaldson** quartet. To be given back-to-back engagements at the Vanguard, the subterranean sanctum of jazz, is an honor afforded to only a chosen few. The inimitable alto saxophonist Donaldson settles in, bringing his high-style blend of authentic bop and good-time R. & B. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence."** The aptly titled show features forty-one sumptuous


Honoré Sharrer's 1958 oil "Reception" is part of the octogenarian's twenty-nine-painting retrospective at the Spanierman gallery.

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examples of magnificence woven between 1420 and 1560, including "The Unicorn Defends Itself," from the Met's own Cloisters, along with three panels from the ten-part "Acts of the Apostles," designed by Raphael for the Sistine Chapel, and all four sections of the "Alba Passion" cycle, shown together here for the first time since 1877. Much can be learned about fifteenth-century weaving technology (a skilled craftsman working in the finest silks and metal-wrapped threads might complete half a square yard per month) and the similarities of Netherlandish and Italian styles. But nothing can compare to the iris-hued and opalescent shimmer of the tapestries themselves, which seem one with the myths and fabulous figures they so often illustrate. Through June 19. ♦ **"Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi: Father and Daughter Painters in Baroque Italy."** Through May 12. ♦ **"Surrealism: Desire Unbound."** Through May 5. ♦ **"Earthly Bodies: Irving Penn's Nudes, 1949-50."** Through April 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

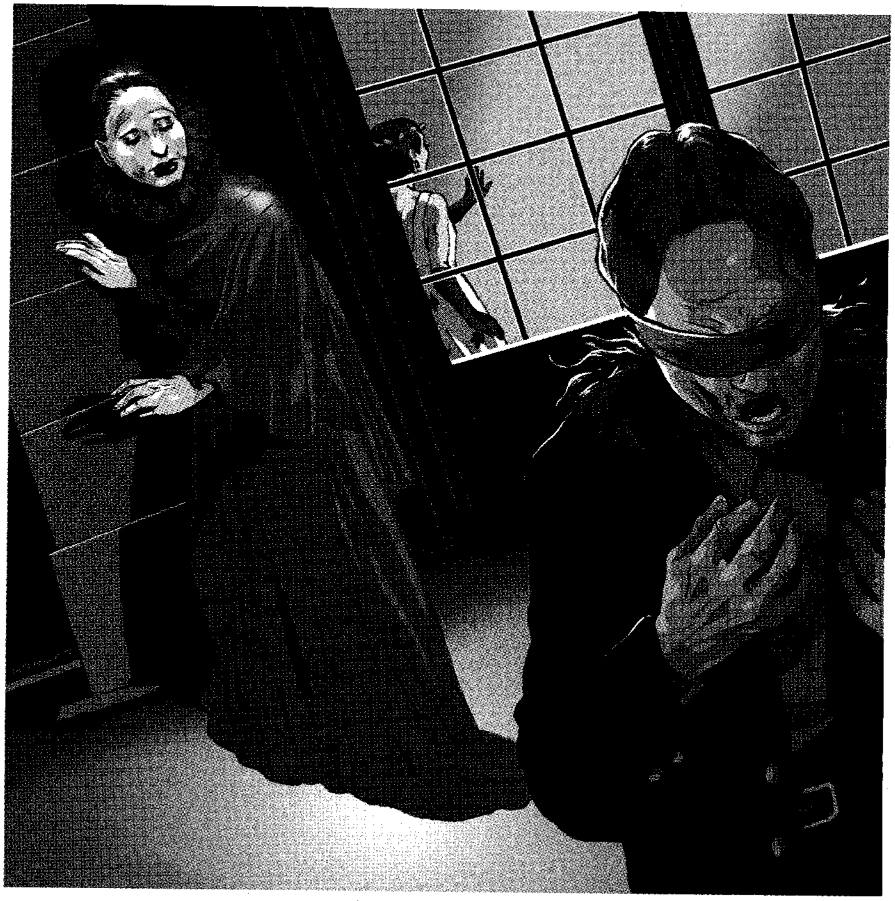
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"The Russian Avant-Garde Book"** proves that you can judge a book by its cover. The museum showcases a recent windfall of books from the Russian avant-garde. (Three hundred of the eleven hundred volumes donated by the Judith Rothschild Foundation are on view.) The exhibition opens with early collaborations between poets and Futurist painters, such as Mayakovsky and Malevich, whose book "Patriotic Placards" was produced during the First World War. (Most of this early work is highly experimental, such as "Tango with Cows," whose pages are printed on wallpaper.) The show winds up in the thirties, when Constructivist artists including Rodchenko and Lissitzky lent their skills to Soviet propaganda. The dynamic designs—tanks and troops in star formation, myriad hands raised in diagonal salute—are compelling enough to make you whistle the "Internationale" and other red-diaper tunes. Through May 2. ♦ **"Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting."** Gerhard Richter has worked in many styles since 1961, when he escaped from East Germany. They include mordant variations on Pop art, hauntingly beautiful Photo-Realist paintings in several genres, abstracts that convey self-doubt with panache, and a fifteen-canvas masterpiece of history painting, about the deaths in 1977 of Baader-Meinhof terrorists who had convulsed Germany for a decade. Previously seen piecemeal here, his art has struck many as tricky and cold, but it turns out that it aches with emotion. Richter's love of painting, in a tense relationship with his fierce skepticism, generates sustained intellectual drama with regular bonuses of rapture. This show may redraw the map of painting's place in the wider culture. Through May 21. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—After the black walls and visual cacophony of the Brazilian extravaganza that precedes it, Rachel Whiteread's massive sculptural installation fills the museum's top-floor galleries like a silent lament. Whiteread has cast the interior of her London studio and home, a fifties-era building that previously served as a synagogue and a warehouse. The resulting behemoth, which invokes both the sacred and the mundane, is devoid of architectural detail, except for the occasional heating duct or electrical outlet. The effect is at once obdurate and illusory. Through June 5. ♦ **"Brazil: Body and Soul."** Through May 29. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The 2002 Biennial is a vast, pleasant, rather drab affair, made up of predominantly earnest, unambitious works by a hundred and thirteen artists and collaborative teams on four floors of the museum and in Central Park, where you can find a fifty-foot steel elm tree. The show's New Age-ish curator Lawrence R. Rinder declares that today's



"Orfeo," the final production of BAM*'s Monteverdi cycle, opens on April 22.*

young American artists crave "some greater role than mere decoration or ironic critique." His Biennial bunch achieves something decidedly lesser, on the whole, with gimmicky audio and computer works, self-indulgent installations, and a great many unsurprising video projections. ("Vita brevis, video longa," one observer remarked.) Serious painting and sculpture are scarce. Momentary relief arrives in the form of memorable pieces by Vija Celmins, Chan Chao, Stephen Dean, and Lorna Simpson. Through May 26. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Sensation" this is not: **"Star Wars: The Magic of Myth"** adds many artifacts from the original trilogy (and first prequel) to a well-attended travelling exhibition that opened at D.C.'s National Air and Space Museum in 1997. More than thirty costumed mannequins and models (of Anakin Skywalker's pod racers, of the Imperial Star Destroyer, of Jabba the Hutt's palace) supplement the storyboards and other intergalactic ephemera. Through July 7. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (628-6200)—**"Oskar Kokoschka: Early Portraits from Vienna and Berlin, 1909-1914"** enhances the tone of feverish refinement that this new, small, superb museum has brought to New York. The young Kokoschka, with encouragement from Gustav Klimt, grew from an illustrator with a neo-medieval bent into the most hot and bothered of Expressionist portraitists. Adolf Loos, Anton von Webern, Karl Kraus, and other fabled persons of the time writhe in their skins under the artist's brush. The portraits share a fury rather than a style; like a startled flock of birds, Kokoschka's works would not settle down. A section documents his scalding affair with the femme fatale Alma Mahler (Gustav's young widow). The show evokes a milieu in which genius was only to be expected and intensity was all. Through June 10. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

HONORÉ SHARRER
The eighty-one-year-old artist has survived many of the movements she took no part in, and her style—a blend of Surrealism, sharp social observation, and perspectival trickery in the manner of the early Renaissance—has come through it all looking remarkably fresh. This timely retrospective of twenty-nine paintings offers many examples of her vinegary expertise. "Reception" (1958), which shows thirty-some guests, has odd Buñuel-like touches that make for a piquant contrast with the powerful and sweaty-palmed gathering of the handsomely dressed. Through May 11. (Spanierman, 45 E. 58th St. 832-0208.)

LOUISE NEVELSON
A show of sculpture from the fifties and sixties. Shadows were as essential a material to Nevelson as the salvaged wood she used to construct her totemic columns and hivelike wall works, which she painted a monochrome black or white. The gallery follows suit, painting its walls black and gray and filling every available cranny with objects. The crowded installation mirrors works like the "Sky Cathedrals," a series of cubbyholes crowded with knobs and spools and finials, a shrine to dark mysteries. Through April 27. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

TOMER HANUKA

Short List

JAY DE FEO
Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082.
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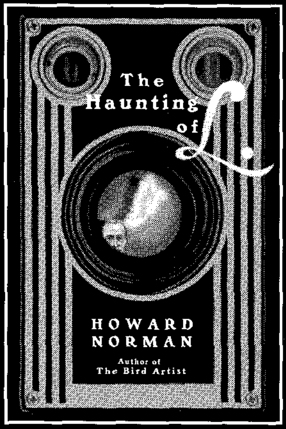

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the portrait-maker's
compulsion. Mysterious,
morally complex, and
erotically charged."
—ANDREA BARRETT

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GALLERIES-CHELSEA

PIA FRIES
This show marks the New York début of a Swiss artist whose garish abstract paintings follow in the goopy footsteps of Jules Olitski in his cake-frosting period. Each painting is rendered on a wooden board that is painted white and then silk-screened with photographs of the bloblike sculptures Fries fashions from oil paint or crêpe paper. (The imagery mimics the action of the painting itself.) Muscular mounds of colorful paint are then applied to the board in caricatures of brushstrokes. Fries studied with Gerhard Richter from 1980 to 1986, and her works suggest his smeared abstractions on a steroid overdose. Through April 27. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 229-2766.)

BETSY KAUFMAN
The artist uses tricks from modernist painting to make subtle abstract paintings and works on paper that, at their best, combine grace with sly wit. Still, this is familiar terrain, and Kaufman's patron saints are many. Stephen Westfall hovers in the off-kilter grids in "Shadows Unhinged," Bridget Riley hums in the optical buzz of "Noonday," and Agnes Martin is unmistakable in the soft pencil pinstripes of an untitled watercolor. The art-historical allusion is less subtle in the painting "Still Not," a visual pun that renders the curving shards of a Clifford Still painting in wood-grain striations of brown and ochre. Think of it as "Still Knotty Pine." Through May 4. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.)

AURA ROSENBERG
For the past ten years, Rosenberg has photographed her daughter with her playmates in the city of Berlin, and the project evolved into an homage to Walter Benjamin's episodic memoir of his boyhood there. The gallery walls—painted in a birthday-party palette of light blue, yellow, and red—are lined with vivid photographs (and a handful of sculptures), each an allusion to a passage from Benjamin's "Berliner Kindheit," from a dresser drawer filled with children's socks to a merry-go-round to a hiding place behind a curtain. Rosenberg's playful conceit, mingling Benjamin's memories with her own, conjures a child's invention of the world through the imagination. Through April 27. (Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 807-9494.)

Short List

JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100.
Through April 27.

ELIZABETH MURRAY
Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 929-7000.
Through April 27.

UGO RONDINONE
Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.
Through April 20.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

ALLAN WEXLER
The tidy title of the 1997 book devoted to Wexler, "The Fine Art of Applied Art," barely hints at the look of this show, which is wood shop gone mad. A miniature trestle assembled from coffee stirrers crisscrosses up and up from one room to another; a table with chairs built in at both sociable and unsociable angles forces you to acknowledge design. Wexler has built one piece that he calls "Wall (I Want to Become Architecture)"; it's made to cradle his seated form, from the top of his skull to the sides of his legs and the bottoms of his feet. He makes it easy to sympathize with such deep inanimate longings. Through April 20. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

"LOWLAND LULLABY"
This collaboration between the poet John Giorno and the Swiss artists Ugo Rondinone and Urs Fischer is intended to showcase Fischer (he's the youngster), but it's Giorno who shines. An audiotape of his mesmerizing reading of a poem written for the occasion emanates from speakers embedded in a patterned steel platform (Rondinone's contribution). The platform is surrounded by an installation of Fischer's wobbly drawings of psychedelic imagery (a spiderweb, a skull, an eyeball) and a pair of forgettable sculptures, one of which involves a pair of charred pink chairs. Through May 11. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway. 925-2035.)

Short List

KIM SOOJA
Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441.
Through May 18.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DAWOUD BEY
Bey follows his stunning triptychs from the 2000 Biennial with straight-up head-and-shoulders portraits of city kids in their environments. Their wary and sometimes tender expressions evoke Renaissance portraits, giving these teen-agers the monumental presence that life rarely allows them. Through June 1. (Gorney Bravin & Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372.)

C. J. LAUGHLIN
Laughlin (1905-85) was a writer, poet, architectural historian, self-taught photographer, and venerable New Orleans character who was obsessed with the decaying manor houses along the Mississippi. He photographed models in tableaux at former plantation houses for more than forty years, inventing a kind of surrealistic idiom all his own. In his "Figure with a Magic Light in Her Forehead," a wispy lady stands in a crumbling doorway, with a picture frame held around her face, and her forehead, indeed, emits a mysterious light. The style, a great influence on Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Francesca Woodman, and countless art-school photographers, is often affectionately called Backyard Gothic. Through May 4. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.)

DAVID MALIN
Capturing outer-space phenomena from an Australian observatory hardly seems the stuff of art, until you catch the gorgeous platinum prints by the British photographer and astronomer David Malin. The gases and dust that form the Helix Nebula swirl into an eyeball floating among countless stars. Galaxies take concrete shape, and the Horsehead Nebula rears to life. The platinum printing process gives these pictures a depth that is stately, timeless, and trippy all at once. Through May 25. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

ELISA SIGHICELLI
The interiors shot by this London-based Italian photographer—vast Cuban rooms, gracefully and sparely decorated—are displayed on light boxes that make much of the tropical light seeping in under the curtains. Sighicelli's low-slung angle approximates a baby's-eye view, practically turning the empty, shiny floors into an invitation to crawl. Through April 27. (Cohan Leslie and Brown, 138 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 206-8710.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"Rise of the Picture Press: Photographic Reportage in Illustrated Magazines, 1918-1939"** and **"Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Photographs."** Through June 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

MARTIN WEBER
The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 662-8610.
Through April 28.

See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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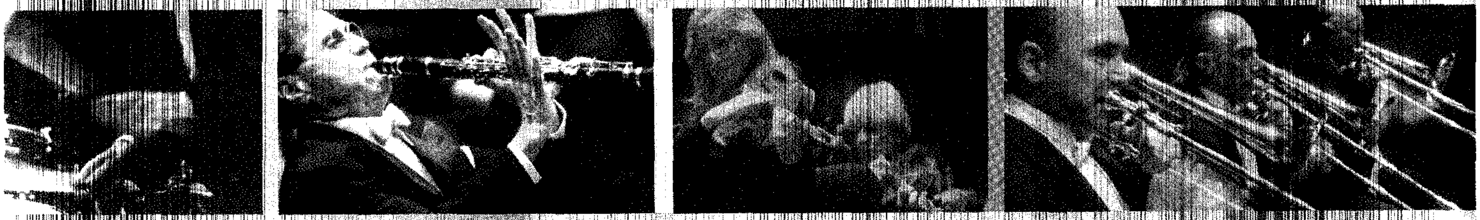

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FRIDAY MASTERWORKS

(FR4A) FRIDAYS 8:00PM

STARRING MARTHA ARGERICH, JANE EAGLEN, AND BEETHOVEN'S NINTH

Sep 20
Lorin Maazel, conductor
Vocal soloists: Marina Mescheriakova*, Jill Grove*, Michael Schade*
New York Choral Artists

JOHN ADAMS
On the Transmigration of Souls
(World Premiere: New York Philharmonic /Lincoln Center's Great Performer's co-commission)
BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9

Jan 17
Zubin Mehta, conductor • Jane Eaglen, soprano

WAGNER *Götterdämmerung* selections
R. STRAUSS *Don Juan; Salome* selections: "Dance of the Seven Veils" and Final Scene

Mar 21
Mstislav Rostropovich, conductor
Martha Argerich, piano

BERNSTEIN *Slava! (A Political Overture)*
PROKOFIEV Piano Concerto No. 3
HENRI DUTILLEUX *Timbres, espace, mouvement*
LUTOSŁAWSKI Concerto for Orchestra
This concert is made possible with the generous support of the **National Endowment for the Arts.**

May 2
Kurt Masur, conductor
Vocal soloists: Heidi Grant Murphy, Stanford Olsen, Ewa Podleś*,
New York Choral Artists

HANDEL Ode for St. Cecilia's Day
KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI *Phaedra*
(World Premiere: New York Philharmonic Commission)
This concert is made possible with the generous support of the **National Endowment for the Arts.**

FRIDAY MATINEES

(FR1A) FRIDAYS 11:00AM

STARRING ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER, JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, AND BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH

Sep 27
André Previn, conductor
Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

HAYDN Symphony No. 102
RAVEL Piano Concerto in G
SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 6

Jan 3
Lorin Maazel, conductor
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

WILLIAM BOLCOM *Ragomania*
GRIEG Piano Concerto
BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 5

Apr 25
Kurt Masur, conductor • André Previn, conductor
Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin

BRAHMS Variations on a Theme by Haydn
ANDRÉ PREVIN Violin Concerto **(New York Premiere)**
DVOŘÁK Symphony No. 8

***debut**

WEDNESDAY SAMPLER

(SP1) WED 7:30PM

STARRING MARTHA ARGERICH, TCHAIKOVSKY, PROKOFIEV, AND BRAHMS

Oct 9
Lorin Maazel, conductor

BARBER *The School for Scandal* Overture
HINDEMITH Symphony: *Mathis der Maler*
TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 5

Nov 15 (FR)
Sir Colin Davis, conductor
Ian Bostridge*, tenor

PURCELL/Stephen Stucky: *Funeral Music for Queen Mary*
(New York Premiere)
BRITTEN *Les Illuminations*
ELGAR Symphony No. 1

Mar 26
Mstislav Rostropovich, conductor
Martha Argerich, piano

BERNSTEIN *Slava! (A Political Overture)*
PROKOFIEV Piano Concerto No. 3
HENRI DUTILLEUX *Timbres, espace, mouvement*
LUTOSŁAWSKI Concerto for Orchestra
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May 7
Kurt Masur, conductor

SCHUMANN Symphony No. 4
BRAHMS Symphony No. 1

THE VIRTUOSOS

(TU1B) TUESDAYS 7:30PM

STARRING LANG LANG, MAXIM VENGEROV, PIERRE-LAURENT AIMARD, AND PETER SERKIN

Oct 8
Lorin Maazel, conductor • Lang Lang, piano
MUSSORGSKY/Rimsky-Korsakov *Night on Bald Mountain*
RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No. 2
SIBELIUS Symphony No. 2

Dec 3
Christoph von Dohnányi, conductor
Pierre-Laurent Aimard*, piano

JANÁČEK Capriccio
R. STRAUSS Burleske
BRAHMS Symphony No. 2

Feb 26 (WE)
David Robertson, conductor
Peter Serkin, piano

BRAHMS Piano Concerto No. 1
POUL RUDERS *Listening Earth* **(U.S.Premiere)**
JANÁČEK Sinfonietta

Apr 1
Mstislav Rostropovich, conductor
Maxim Vengerov, violin

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 9
BRITTEN Violin Concerto
SHOSTAKOVICH Four Entr'actes from *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*
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YO-YO MA & FRIENDS

(TH4B, SA4B) THURS 7:30PM/SAT 8:00PM

STARRING YO-YO MA, RACHMANINOFF, AND BRAHMS

CHOOSE THURSDAY (TH4B) OR SATURDAY (SA4B) SERIES

Nov 27 (WE) / 30
Christoph von Dohnányi, conductor
Pierre-Laurent Aimard*, piano

JANÁČEK Capriccio
R. STRAUSS Burleske
BRAHMS Symphony No. 2

Jan 2 (TH) only
Lorin Maazel, conductor
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

WILLIAM BOLCOM *Ragomania*
GRIEG Piano Concerto
BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 5

SA4B Feb 14 (FR)
Charles Dutoit, conductor • Paul Groves*, tenor
Westminster Symphonic Choir
BERLIOZ Requiem

Mar 6 / 8
David Zinman, conductor
Emanuel Ax, piano • Yo-Yo Ma, cello
Wu Man*, pipa

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CHRISTOPHER ROUSE *Seeing*
BRIGHT SHENG Concerto for Piano, Cello, Pipa and Chinese Wind Instruments
(World Premiere: New York Philharmonic Commission)
Commissioning support for Bright Sheng's Concerto for Piano, Cello, Pipa and Chinese Wind Instruments has been generously provided by **Emily and Jerry Spiegel** and **Lillian and Maurice Barbash.**

May 22 / 24
Robert Spano*, conductor
Valdine Anderson*, soprano
Women of the New York Choral Artists

SIBELIUS *The Oceanides*
KAIJA SAARIAHO *Château de l'âme*
(New York Premiere)
RACHMANINOFF Symphonic Dances
Robert Spano's debut with the New York Philharmonic is made possible by **The Irene Diamond Fund.**

ITZHAK PERLMAN & FRIENDS

(TH2B, SA2B) THURS 7:30PM/SAT 8:00PM

STARRING ITZHAK PERLMAN, JULIA FISCHER, AND DMITRI HVOROSTOVSKY

CHOOSE THURSDAY (TH2B) OR SATURDAY (SA2B) SERIES

Nov 21 / 23
Yuri Temirkanov, conductor
Dmitri Hvorostovsky, baritone

RAVEL Le tombeau de Couperin
MUSSORGSKY *Songs and Dances of Death*
BRAHMS Symphony No. 4

Jan 9 / 11
Lorin Maazel, conductor
Julia Fischer*, violin

TCHAIKOVSKY *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy-Overture
SIBELIUS Violin Concerto
STRAVINSKY *Petrouchka* (1911)

Mar 13 / 15
David Zinman, conductor
Itzhak Perlman, violin

JOHN HARBISON *The Most Often Used Chords*
TCHAIKOVSKY Violin Concerto
DVOŘÁK Symphony No. 7

May 1 / 3
Kurt Masur, conductor
Vocal soloists: Heidi Grant Murphy, Stanford Olsen, Ewa Podleś*
New York Choral Artists

HANDEL Ode for St. Cecilia's Day
KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI *Phaedra*
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AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
April 17 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Photographs by such figures as Avedon, Bravo, Baron de Meyer ("Maria, a Study," estimated to bring approximately a hundred thousand dollars), and Ansel Adams. ♦ April 18-19 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: "A Celebration of the English Country House," a sale of silver, paintings, porcelain, furniture, and decorations. ♦ April 24 at 10:15 A.M.: European art from the nineteenth century. ♦ April 24 at 7 and April 25 at 10:15 A.M.: "Magnificent Jewels from the Estate of Janice H. Levin," one of the most important jewelry collections in the world, including an emerald necklace formerly belonging to the Maharaja of Indore and signed pieces by Harry Winston, David Webb, and Van Cleef & Arpels. ♦ April 25 at approximately 11 A.M. and at 2: A sale of jewelry from various owners. ♦ April 25 at 2: European furniture and decorations, also from the Levin estate. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
April 17 at 10 A.M.: Part I of "The Detective Fiction Library of Richard M. Lackritz," featuring books by and about Arthur Conan Doyle. After the auction, at approximately 12:30, the house will offer the only surviving original typescript of Bram Stoker's "Dracula," with notations by the author, which is estimated to bring at least a million dollars. ♦ April 18 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of photographs, featuring works by Man Ray, Frantisek Drtikol, and Margrethe Mather, among others, along with an autographed original print of "Firefighters at Ground Zero, September 11, 2001" (offered to benefit two charities). ♦ April 19 at 10 A.M.: "Important Works of Art by Carl Fabergé from the Forbes Collection." The property of another owner closes the sale: Fabergé's "Winter Egg," given by Tsar Nicholas II to his mother in 1913. ♦ April 24 at 10 A.M. and 2: "Nineteenth-Century Furniture, Sculpture, Works of Art, and Ceramics." ♦ April 25 at 10 A.M.: American paintings, drawings, and sculpture. ♦ April 25 at 10 A.M. and April 26 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of wine. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

PHILLIPS
April 25 at 10:30 A.M.: "The French Eye," modern art, furniture, and design from a single Los Angeles home. The interior designer, Robert Couturier, assembled furnishings to echo the Parisian milieu of the painter Christian Bérard, the designer Jean-Michel Frank, and Marie-Laure de Noailles; one can acquire everything from an exceptional octagonal mirror by Serge Roche (estimated to bring at least a hundred thousand dollars) to a set of gilt-bronze doorplates by Diego Giacometti, in addition to paintings by Bérard and de Noailles themselves. (3 W. 57th St. 940-1200.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The final performances of **"Falstaff,"** with Bryn Terfel (in the title role), Marina Mescheriakova, Lyubov Petrova, Wendy White, Susanne Mentzer, Gregory Turay, and Dwayne Croft; James Levine conducts. (April 17 and April 20 at 8.) ♦ Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's **"Sly,"** with Plácido Domingo, Maria Guleghina, and Juan Pons; Marco Armiliato. (April 18 and April 24 at 8 and April 27 at 1:30.) ♦ With Cynthia Lawrence replacing Guleghina. (April 30 at 8.) ♦ The final performances of **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Vesselina Kasarova, Juan Diego Flórez, Earle Patriarco, and Paul Plishka; Yves Abel. (April 19 at 8.) ♦ With Vivica Genaux, John Osborn, and Simon Keenlyside replacing Kasarova, Flórez, and Patriarco. (April 23 at 8.) ♦ With Genaux, Flórez, and Keenlyside. (April 26 at 8.) ♦ The final performance of Berg's **"Lulu,"** with Christine Schäfer, Hanna Schwarz, David Kuebler, and James Courtney; Levine. (April 20 at 1:30.) ♦

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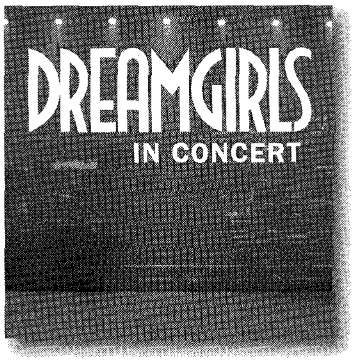

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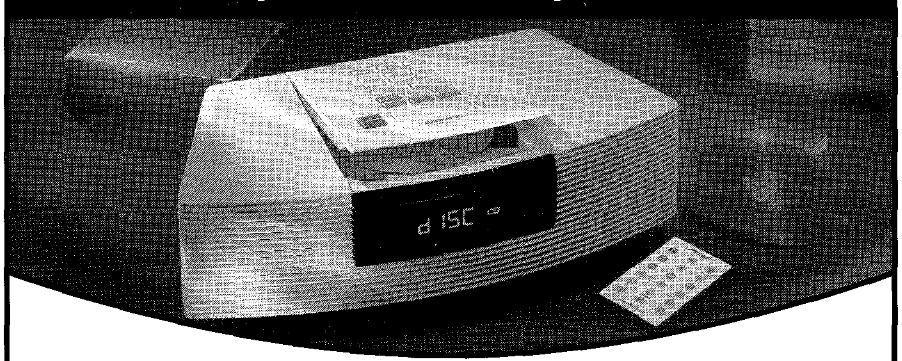

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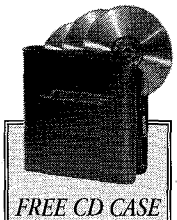

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Tim Albery's 1996 production of Britten's **"A Midsummer Night's Dream"** returns to the house, with Alexandra Deshorties, Susan Chilcott (a début), Maria Zifchak, David Daniels, Paul Groves, Nathan Gunn, and Peter Rose in the leading roles; David Atherton. (April 22 at 8 and April 25 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Maureen O'Flynn, Frank Lopardo, and Leo Nucci (in the title role); Domingo. (April 27 at 8.) ♦ John Harbison is one of America's masters of art song, but his opera **"The Great Gatsby,"** which had its Met world première two seasons ago, received mixed reviews then for its libretto and dramaturgy. (Some revisions have reportedly been made.) Perhaps there's something about the novel that makes it resistant to transformation (remember the movie version?), but the quality of the cast speaks for the respect in which the composer is held. It includes Dawn Upshaw (as Daisy), Jerry Hadley (as Gatsby), Margaret Lattimore (as Jordan Baker), Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (as Myrtle Wilson), Mark Baker (as Tom Buchanan), and Dwayne Croft (as Nick Carraway). Levine, one of the composer's champions, conducts. (April 29 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

"Agrippina" is the latest and best of City Opera's deliberately lighthearted Handel productions, skillfully presenting the tale of intrigue at the decadent Roman court of Claudius and Nero as a sex farce in the loose, colloquial manner that is becoming a house style. There are certainly other ways to approach this opera, the first of the composer's masterpieces, but it's roomy enough to take the treatment; Jane Glover's meticulous conducting blooms in intimate moments, and gives the show a much needed grounding in early-music practice. The fine cast includes Brenda Harris, Kimberly Barber, Nancy Allen Lundy, David Walker, and Gregory Reinhart. (April 17 and April 23 at 7:30 and April 20 at 8.) ♦ John Philip Sousa's operetta **"The Glass Blowers,"** with Anna Christy, Jennifer Dudley, Jeffrey Lentz, and Richard Whitehouse; Jonathan Sheffer conducts. (April 18 and April 24 at 7:30, April 20 and April 28 at 1:30, and April 26 at 8.) ♦ **"Tosca,"** with Elizabeth Blancke-Biggs, Jorge Antonio Pita, and Stephen Kechulius; Steven Mosteller. (April 19 at 8 and April 21 and April 27 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Kirstin Chávez, Monique McDonald, Yevgeny Shapovalov, and Michael Chioldi; George Manahan. (April 25 at 7:30 and April 27 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 307-4100. These are the final performances of the season.)

THE MONTEVERDI CYCLE

Pierre Audi's Dutch National Opera production of **"The Coronation of Poppea,"** with the harpsichordist Christophe Rousset leading his ensemble Les Talens Lyriques; the singers include Cynthia Haymon, Anne Brigitte Balleys, and Michael Chance. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. April 16 and April 19 at 7 and April 21 at 2.) ♦ Monteverdi's first opera, **"Orfeo"** (from 1607), is recognized as the genre's first work of genius. The director of Chicago Opera Theatre's production (its first in New York), Diane Paulus, has set the tale of Orpheus and Euridice in modern dress, at a wicked high-society cocktail party (in the spirit of the work's first performance, at the ducal court of Mantua). Laurence Dale and Valérie MacCarthy sing the leading roles; Jane Glover conducts. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 22, April 24, and April 26-27 at 7:30. These are the final performances of the festival.)

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK

Eve Queler conducts Donizetti's **"Marino Faliero,"** one of the few bel-canto operas to give a basso (here, the Met's John Relyea) the leading role; the cast also includes Angeles Blancas Gulin, Gregory Kunde, and C. Y. Liao. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 21 at 8.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE: WEBER'S "OBERON"

Weber's final stage work is perhaps the ultimate case of a beautiful opera ruined by a ludicrous libretto (a kind of English panto of the "Ali Baba" variety). Thankfully, the Chorale's concert performance condenses the action into narration, declaimed by Roger Rees; the rest of the cast, equally distinguished, includes Deborah Voigt, Anthony Dean Griffey, and Stuart Neill. Robert Bass conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 23 at 8.)

"HELOISE AND ABELARD"

The Juilliard Opera Center hosts the première of Stephen Paulus's take on the medieval romance, with a libretto by Frank Corsaro. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 721-6500. April 24, April 27, and April 29 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Riccardo Muti conducts Verdi's "Requiem," with Barbara Frittoli (in her début with the orchestra), Violeta Urmana, Giuseppe Sabbatini (another début), and Samuel Ramey as the vocal soloists, along with the Westminster Symphonic Choir. (April 17 and April 19-20 at 8.) ♦ Throughout his long career, Colin Davis has remained devoted to the music of Sibelius and Mozart, which he directs with a fine balance of enthusiasm and finesse. Sibelius will come first in Davis's two-week Philharmonic residency, in a program mixing two rare works ("Pohjola's Daughter," and the "Six Humoresques," for violin, with Glenn Dicterow) with the towering Fifth Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. April 25-27 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AT CARNEGIE HALL

April 18 at 8: All-Tchaikovsky programs are hardly uncommon, but this one, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, will at least have attitude. Christian Tetzlaff, a young violinist of interpretive intensity and intellectual grit, takes on the Violin Concerto; the conductor is the early-music guru Roger Norrington, who finishes the concert with the Symphony No. 6 ("Pathétique"). ♦ April 20 at 8: Hélène Grimaud joins the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra for a program of Schumann (the Piano Concerto), Brahms, and David Diamond (the scintillating "Rounds," for strings). ♦ April 30 at 8: Mariss Jan-

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sons conducts the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in the New York premières of Christopher Rouse's "Rapture" and Michael Hersch's Symphony No. 2, along with Mozart's "Requiem" (with the soloists Hei-Kyung Hong, Ruxandra Donose, Christian Elsner, John Relyea, and the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh). (247-7800.)

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
No living musician has a more vital link to the works of Dmitri Shostakovich than the cellist-conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, whose ebullient and rebellious personality stokes the fire within the composer's doleful and ironic music. Rostropovich brings the L.S.O. to Avery Fisher Hall for three concerts devoted to the music of his dear friend. April 21 at 3: Rostropovich gave the storied Philadelphia première of the Cello Concerto No. 1, but here it'll be performed by Dennis Shapovalov (making his New York début). The grandiloquent Symphony No. 11 ("The Year 1905") finishes the program. ♦ April 22 at 7:30: The Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Garrick Ohlsson, and with Rod Franks on obbligato trumpet) is followed by the Symphony No. 8 in C Minor, the most personal and affecting of the three "War Symphonies." ♦ April 24 at 8: The series ends with the Symphony No. 7, "Leningrad." (721-6500.)

NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY
James DePriest makes his début with the orchestra, conducing music by Haydn, Pärt ("Fratres"), Prokofiev (the "Classical" Symphony), and Turina; the pianist Alicia DeLarrocha plays her signature piece, Falla's "Nights in the Gardens of Spain." (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. April 21-22 at 8.)

EOS ORCHESTRA
Part of what has made Tan Dun's atmospheric film music so effective is its balletic grace and its capacity to surprise—things he might well have learned from John Cage, whose music ("Credo in Us" and his own "choreographic arrangement" of Cage's notorious "4'33"") he conducts on the orchestra's latest concert. Also included is a concerto version (with the cellist Maya Beiser) of his music for "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." (Ethical Culture Society Concert Hall, 2 W. 64th St. 691-6415. April 25 and April 27 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC
Robert Spano conducts two works by Bright Sheng (including the première of "Tibetan Swing") along with Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde" (with the mezzo-soprano Nancy Maultsby and the tenor Anthony Dean Griffey). (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 26-27 at 8.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
The Society hosts a concert by the Guarneri Quartet, who perform music by Dvořák, Mozart (the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major, with André-Michel Schub), and Lukas Foss (the New York première of his String Quartet No. 5). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. April 17 at 8.)

ROBERT PINSKY AND THE TAKÁCS QUARTET: "ALL THE WORLD FOR LOVE"
If any genre of classical music approaches the intimacy of poetry, it's the string quartet—the most intricate and confessional of chamber-music forms. Pinsky, the former U.S. Poet Laureate, and the quartet explore the connections, interspersing performances of works by Barber, Britten, and Janáček (the String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Pages") with readings from the literary works that inspired them, as well as poetry by Frost, Roethke, Louise Glück, and many others. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. April 18 at 8.)

MATTHIAS GOERNE
The young German baritone performs a recital of Mahler and Brahms (including the "Four Serious Songs"). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 19 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
The cellist Fred Sherry coördinates two weeks of concerts. April 19 at 7:30 and April 21 at 4: Beethoven's String Trio in C Minor provides the foun-

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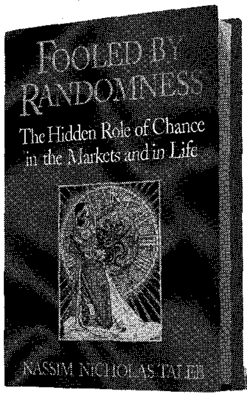

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dation for a program of modern American works, including Davidovsky's "Festino" and a suite of "New Dances" by Elliott Carter, David Liptak, and Melinda Wagner. The players include the guitarist David Starobin, the violinist Jennifer Frautschi, and Sherry. ♦ April 25-26 at 7:30: The flutist Tara O'Connor and the violinists Daniel and Todd Phillips join Sherry for a Bach trio sonata and for Steven Mackey's "Humble River," a set of "commentaries" on Mozart's flute quartets that will be interspersed with movements from the quartets themselves. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

IAN BOSTRIDGE AND JULIUS DRAKE
The tenor and the pianist, preserving a delicate and immediate style of British song performance that harks back to Britten and Pears, present an all-Schubert program at Alice Tully Hall. (721-6500. April 20 at 8.)

VISION-INTO-ART: "DEMOCRAZY"
A new series emphasizing collaborations between composers, dancers, and actors presents a program exploring the interaction of art and politics, featuring (among other works) music by John Adams, Robert Beaser, Nigel Westlake, and Paola Prestini. The performers include the dancer Rebecca Stenn and the New York Percussion Quartet. (Clark Studio Theatre, Lincoln Center. April 21 at 3 and at 8. Tickets at the door.)

PIANISTS AT CARNEGIE HALL
Three giants take the stage. April 21 at 2: The elegant Murray Perahia presents a program of Beethoven, Schubert (the Sonata in B-Flat Major, D. 960), and Chopin. ♦ April 24 at 7:30: Alfred Brendel, having bypassed the Mozart sonatas for many years, now finds riches in their concision and simplicity. He plays two of them here along with weightier fare by Brahms (the Four Ballades) and Schubert. ♦ April 28 at 7:30: Krystian Zimerman plays an all-Brahms program (including the Sonatas Nos. 2 and 3). (247-7800.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
April 24 at 8: The guitarists Sérgio and Odair Assad sit in with the violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg for an earthy program of Bartók, Piazzolla, and music in the Gypsy style. ♦ April 28 at 8: Håkan Hagegård sings Schubert's "Winterreise," at the Temple of Dendur. (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
April 18 at 7: Philip Schultz reads from his latest poetry collection, "The Holy Worm of Praise." (Village Community School, 272 W. 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ April 24 at 8: The poet John Ashbery, Anselm Berrigan, and Elaine Equi celebrate the republication of "The Vermont Notebook," the 1975 collaboration between Ashbery and the artist Joe Brainard. (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ April 29 at 8: Richard Powers offers selections from his forthcoming novel, "Time of Our Singing," and John Barth reads from his fiction. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

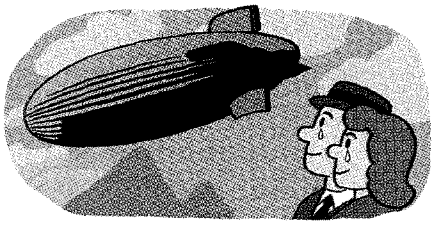
TALKS
April 25 at 8: Larry Harvey, the founder of that annual gathering of artists and card-carrying counterculturists in the Nevada desert known as the Burning Man Project, talks about consumerism, commercialism, and the commodification of culture. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, visit www.sealspace.org.) ♦ April 29 at 7:30: The poet Anne Carson discusses translating Sappho. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 529-4530.)

TOUR
April 21 at 11 A.M.: On a walk through lower Manhattan, the artist Michele Brody explains her public-art project "Re-Covering the Cityscape: Impressions of History Underfoot," which highlights urban landmarks through carefully placed newly designed manhole covers. For more information, call 415-5500.

BOOK CURRENTS

Full of Hot Air

Next month marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Hindenburg disaster, in which the mammoth airship—to some a hopeful symbol of world unity, to others a harbinger of Third Reich aspirations—met its fiery demise over Lakehurst, New Jersey. Although the destruction of the Hindenburg spelled the end of the great zeppelins, a new wave of airships may be upon us. (The CargoLifter, a giant German airship, is currently being readied for flight.) A recent spate of books re-create the era when zeppelins were the finest way to fly.


MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

As Douglas Botting points out in **DR. ECKENER'S DREAM MACHINE** (Holt), it was the Graf Zeppelin that (at nine thousand dollars a ticket) was the first airship to circumnavigate the globe, in 1929, before airplanes were capable of covering long routes in a short time. The zeppelin also inspired poetry: Dr. Hugo Eckener, the psychologist who perfected and popularized Count Zeppelin's invention, called it "a fabulous silver fish, floating quietly in the ocean of air." Despite occasional developmental turbulence (the doomed LZ-5, for instance, rammed into a pear tree), the zeppelin soon became an expression of German identity, as the historian Guillaume de Syon argues in **ZEPPELIN!: GERMANY AND THE AIRSHIP, 1900-1939** (Johns Hopkins). De Syon describes how Eckener's "flying cigar" became a national obsession, even lending its phallic profile to sell laundry detergent.

Henning Boëtius's father was at the elevator wheel of the Hindenburg when it went down, on May 6, 1937. In his novel **THE PHOENIX** (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday), translated from the German by John Cullen, Boëtius offers an elegiac view of the ill-fated airship. As the mighty zeppelin succumbs to flames, Boëtius imagines his dazed father thinking, "Two little words . . . Too bad."

—*Mark Rozzo*

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MOVIES OPENING

CHELSEA WALLS
Ethan Hawke directed this drama about a group of writers and musicians who live in the Chelsea Hotel. The ensemble cast includes Uma Thurman, Kris Kristofferson, Robert Sean Leonard, Rosario Dawson, and Steve Zahn. Opening April 19. (Chelsea Cinemas and Village Theatre VII.)

DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS
Stacy Peralta's documentary about the early days of skateboarding in Southern California. Sean Penn narrates. Opening April 26. (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and 19th Street East 6.)

ENIGMA
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 19.

FACING THE MUSIC
Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson directed this documentary about the downsizing of the University of Sydney's music department. Opening April 24. (Film Forum.)

GIRLS CAN'T SWIM
Anne-Sophie Birot's drama about the intense friendship between two teen-age girls and how it changes when one of them shows an interest in boys. In French. Opening April 19. (Quad Cinema.)

HOME MOVIE
A documentary by Chris Smith ("American Movie") about five unusual houses and the people who live in them. Shown in conjunction with "Heavy Metal Parking Lot," classic footage of Judas Priest fans circa 1986. Opening April 26.

JASON X
In the tenth installment of the "Friday the 13th" horror series, Jason stalks the inhabitants of a space colony. Directed by James Isaac. Opening April 26.

LIFE OR SOMETHING LIKE IT
A drama directed by Stephen Herek with Angelina Jolie as a television news reporter who upends her life after a homeless psychic (Tony Shalhoub) predicts she will die within a few days. With Edward Burns and Stockard Channing. Opening April 26.

MURDER BY NUMBERS
Barbet Schroeder directed this thriller about two high-school students (Ryan Gosling and Michael Pitt) who attempt to pull off a perfect murder. With Sandra Bullock as the F.B.I. profiler investigating them. Opening April 19.

MURDEROUS MAIDS
A dramatization of a famous 1933 French crime in which two chambermaids killed their mistress and her daughter. With Sylvie Testud and Julie-Marie Parmentier. In French. Opening April 19. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

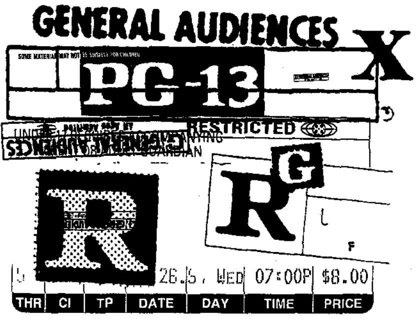
MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING
Nia Vardalos adapts her one-woman show about a thirtyish Greek-American woman who starts dating a non-Greek vegetarian schoolteacher (John Corbett). Directed by Joel Zwick. Opening April 19.

NIGHT AT THE GOLDEN EAGLE
Adam Rifkin ("Detroit Rock City") directed this drama about two old crooks (played by the nonprofessional actors Donnie Montemarano and Vinny Argiro) who reunite at a seedy Los Angeles motel. Also with James Caan and Natasha Lyonne. Opening April 26. (Village East Cinemas.)

NINE QUEENS
An Argentinean film about a pair of small-time swindlers who get drawn into a sophisticated scam to sell counterfeit rare stamps. In Spanish. Opening April 19. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

RAIN
A thirteen-year-old-girl on a summer holiday with her family realizes that her parents' marriage is falling apart. Directed by the New Zealand filmmaker Christine Jeffs. Opening April 26. (Angelika Film Center.)

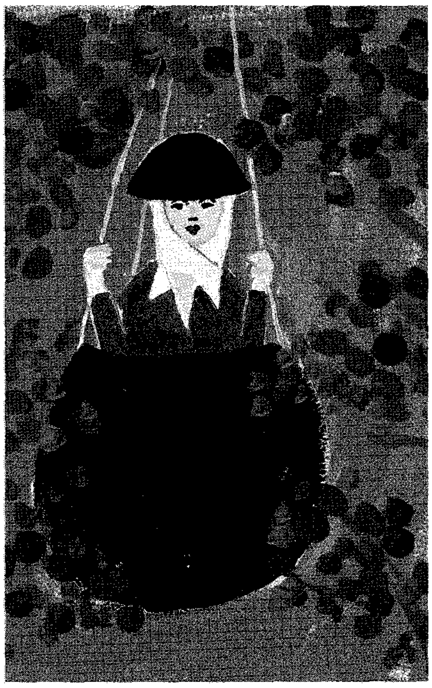
SADE
Daniel Auteuil plays a middle-aged, imprisoned Marquis de Sade in this historical drama directed by Benoît Jacquot. In French. Opening April 26. (Cinema Village.)



THE SALTON SEA
A crime thriller set among the community of speed freaks, drifters, and petty criminals who live around the Salton Sea, a low-lying lake in Southern California. With Val Kilmer, Deborah Kara Unger, and Vincent D'Onofrio. Opening April 26.

THE SCORPION KING
Chuck Russell directed this spin-off of the "Mummy" series with Dwayne (the Rock) Johnson as the last surviving member of a clan of assassins. Also with Michael Clarke Duncan and Kelly Hu. Opening April 19.

SEX WITH STRANGERS
Joe and Harry Gantz, the creators of "Taxicab Confessions," directed this documentary about swinging couples. Opening April 26.



At MOMA, Fellini's "Juliet of the Spirits" and other restored Italian classics.

ELIZA GRAN

SOME BODY
A drama shot on digital video that chronicles the rapidly disintegrating life of a Los Angeles schoolteacher (Stephanie Bennett). Opening April 26. (Sunshine Cinema.)

TRIUMPH OF LOVE
An adaptation of an eighteenth-century play about a conniving princess (Mira Sorvino) who ends up engaged to three different people. With Ben Kingsley and Fiona Shaw. Directed by Clare Peploe and produced by Bernardo Bertolucci. Opening April 17. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 2.)

VULGAR
Bryan Johnson, a protégé of Kevin Smith, directed this story of a struggling clown (Brian O'Halloran) who reinvents himself as a transvestite clown and performs at bachelor parties. Opening April 26. (Angelika Film Center.)

WORLD TRAVELER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 19. (First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square.)

FILM NOTES

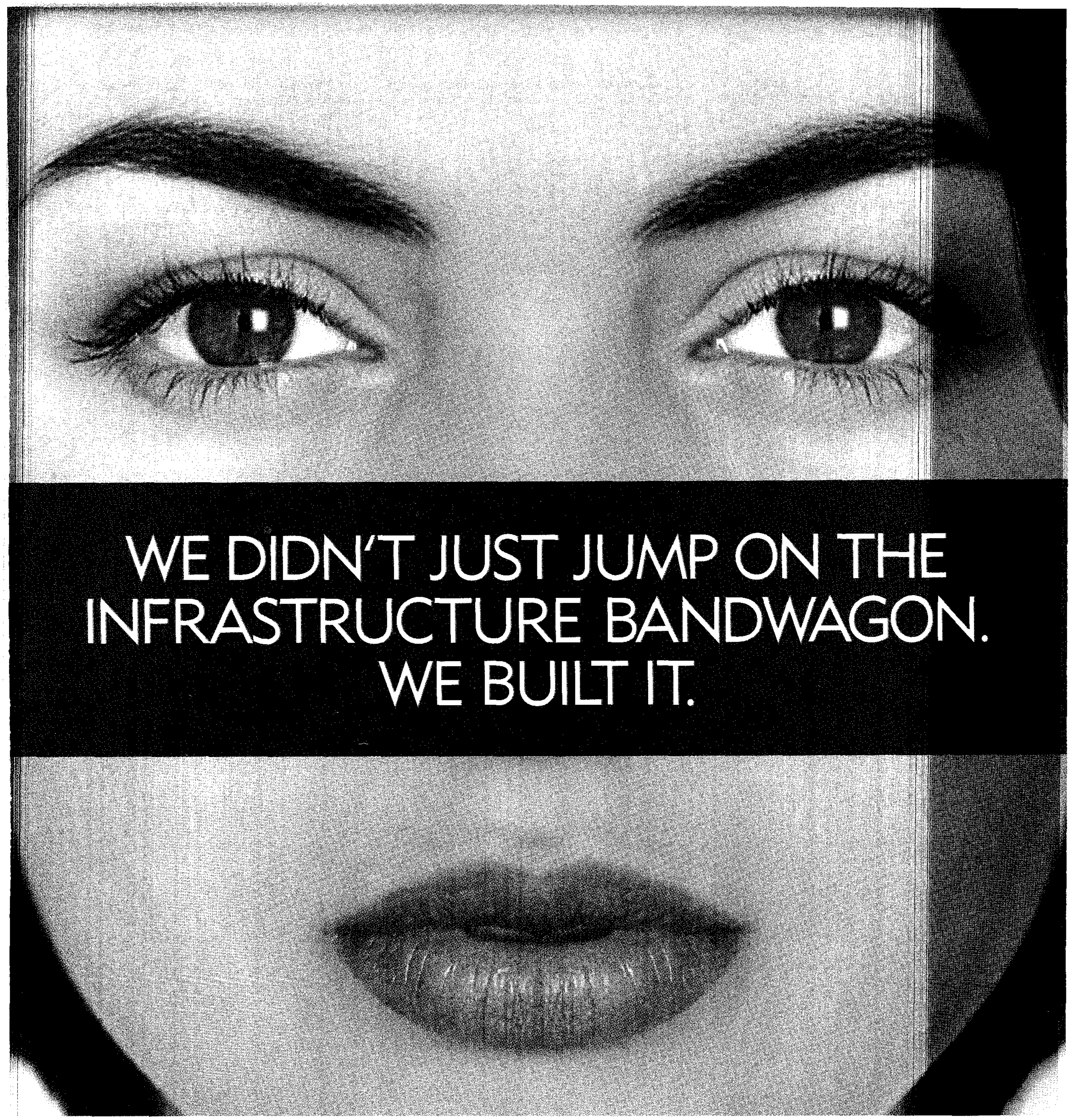
A BEAUTIFUL MIND
If you think the title stinks, try the movie. On March 24, it received Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay, thus proving that although the Academy may shy away from honoring comedies, some of its own decisions can still be guaranteed to give us all a good laugh. Russell Crowe plays John Nash, a real-life mathematician whose most radical work was produced in his early twenties and who shared the 1994 Nobel Prize for Economics at the age of sixty-six. In between lay years of darkness, during which Nash was assailed by paranoid schizophrenia. When it comes to the delicate matter of his delusions, this earnest movie, written by Akiva Goldsman and directed by Ron Howard, pulls a flagrant scam: whole characters and episodes are presented as urgently authentic, only to be revealed as figments of a cracked imagination. Crowe pulls out the stops, but he looks too bullish and controlled for such a pitiable victim. The movie grinds on forever until it bumps into redemption; the best reason to stay with it is Jennifer Connelly, who smolders and suffers to perfection as Nash's weary wife. Math skills not required.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/7/02.) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BIG TROUBLE
Certainly is. Barry Sonnenfeld directed this zipless adaptation of Dave Barry's comic novel about a nuclear bomb that's passed around among a group of stumblers and bumblers in Miami. He paces the comedy so slowly that the laughs never arrive. Even with a team of veteran actors in hot pursuit of a good time (Stanley Tucci, Rene Russo, and Tim Allen, among others), the movie limps along, thanks to a script of tired one-liners and uninspired sight gags.—*Bruce Diones* (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

CLUNY BROWN
A girl with a passion for plumbing is terribly repugnant to stuffy people who don't want to admit that they have drains. This wonderfully suggestive idea is at the center of Ernst Lubitsch's mischievous 1946 satire on English propriety, set in rural England. Jennifer Jones is Cluny (it's her lightest, funniest performance, rivalled only by her dippy blonde in "Beat the Devil"), and Charles Boyer is a debonair scrounger—a displaced European sophisticate who encourages her to flout social conventions. These two are surrounded by a prime collection of English class and mass types. It's a lovely, easygoing comedy, full of small surprising touches.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; April 24.)

LES DESTINÉES
The air is soft, and everyone speaks in clipped tones in this sumptuous yet relaxed French epic that begins in 1900 and traces the interlocked affairs of two large haut-bourgeois Protestant families, one of which controls a cognac company in the Charente section of France, and the other a porcelain factory in Limoges. The hero, Jean Barnery (Charles Berling), an intense, fine-grained young man, who is a minister in the fictional town of Barbizac, dismisses the wife he doesn't love (Isabelle Huppert) and drops out of the ministry in shame, only to fall in love with the ravishing young Pauline (Emmanuelle Béart). Unlike such comparable family epics as Visconti's "The Leopard" and Bertolucci's "1900," the movie is unemphatic and largely fleeting—the most substantial moments pass in a semi-whisper. The visual scheme appears to be derived from Bonnard and Vuillard. Directed by Olivier Assayas and based on a novel by Jacques Chardonne. In French.—*David Denby* (4/15/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

DESTRY RIDES AGAIN
"Marlene Dietrich! . . . When you wear feathers, and furs, and plumes, you wear them as the birds and animals wear them, as though they belonged to your body."—Jean Cocteau. "She possesses the rarest of civilized virtues, irony."—Kenneth Tynan.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These two gifts were combined in her classic 1939 comedy role as Frenchy, the quixotic harlot of a frontier saloon. By taking her spangles and feathers into the Old West and dropping her sultry voice to a howling baritone, Deitrich revitalized her own career. James Stewart is charming and even a little bit sexy as the mild-mannered Destry.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; April 28-29.)

THE GRIM REAPER

In Bernardo Bertolucci's début 1962 film, based on a Pasolini story of the Roman lower depths, the precocious, twenty-two-year-old director hit on his own style of poetic realism. The police find the body of a streetwalker near the Tiber River. One by one, investigators question five suspects: a petty thief, a pseudo-suave ex-con, a hick soldier, a nervous teen-age boy, and a cool blond fellow from the North, who wears telltale wooden clogs. In the vaguely "Rashomon"-like narrative, Bertolucci shows how their stories intersect and how reality differs from their alibis. He swings his camera into these busted lives with a lilting intimacy. The best section has an extraordinary combination of low-key humor and heartbreak, encapsulating a teen-age friendship in a twenty-four-hour time span. In Italian.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; April 21 and April 23.)

HIGH CRIMES

The talented director Carl Franklin runs amok with paranoid-thriller plot clichés that don't hang together. The furniture-making husband (Jim Caviezel) of a tough, young San Francisco attorney (Ashley Judd) is arrested by the military and accused of massacring civilians in El Salvador years earlier. Judd defends her husband against a government juggernaut with the help of an alcoholic military lawyer (Morgan Freeman) who slips on and off the wagon. That old Ashley-Morgan magic, effective in past movies, feels flat this time. None of the key relationships in the movie are plausible (the picture has been generally miscast), the innumerable scenes of the defense team being menaced and beaten up don't make much sense, and the essential turning points, including a big reversal at the end, are poorly dramatized. From a novel by Joseph Finder.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

IRIS

Richard Eyre imparts an affectionate and reverential gloss to the mental decline of the writer Iris Murdoch. He tells the story in a series of linked vignettes, with scenes from the life of the young Iris juxtaposed with those from the old. It's a particular trick of film, to fuse together the ages of life this way—a technique with an edge of cruelty that also gives it sting. Judi Dench plays the elderly Iris, and her portrayal of Murdoch's sickness is physically precise, a careful study of carriage and expression. Jim Broadbent, as the old John Bayley, is initially all donnish bemusement, but his performance deepens as he becomes a caregiver overtaken by chagrin and grief. Kate Winslet and Hugh Bonneville play the couple in their youth, and in their too brief scenes they charmingly convey a love in the offing, a bumbler chasing a sprite.—*Michael Agger* (Sutton 1 and 2 and Village East Cinemas.)

KISSING JESSICA STEIN

The title character is a nice Jewish girl from Scarsdale who is not gay, but wants to know how to be. After a series of dates with feckless men, she answers a personal ad placed by a woman seeking a woman. So far, so straight. The twist is that the woman who wrote the ad is, like Jessica, débuting as a lesbian, and together the two begin a jittery emotional experiment. Heather Juergensen and Jennifer Westfeldt play the leads, and they also wrote the script, which is very chatty and fast. Their courtship scenes convince where it matters most: showing how the skittish and prim Stein might loosen up and respond to another woman, a self-imposed dare that becomes a reality. The conclusion is a confused mess, but in a way that's fine: it leaves the movie open-ended, giving it an afterlife as a conversation piece.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE KOMEDIANT

Arnon Goldfinger's group portrait of the Yiddish actor and song-and-dance man Pesach'ke Burstein and his family troupe is the documentary equivalent of a page-turner. Resonating with all the upheavals of the twentieth century as well as the personal tensions of what happens in a family business when it happens to be show biz, the movie enthralls and delights, thanks to intimate interviews with the Bursteins (think of them as a Semitic version of the Four Cohans).—*M.S.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and BAM Rose Cinemas; April 20.)

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HANK GREENBERG

Aviva Kempner's documentary celebration of the Detroit Tigers first baseman defines one of those instances—rarer than sportswriters admit—in which a champion athlete becomes a genuine, all-around hero. Greenberg played Hall of Fame ball in the nineteen-thirties and forties. He also spent four years at what should have been the height of his career battling Hitler and company. Throughout, he understood his role as Jewish superstar; though nonreligious himself, he refused to play on Yom Kippur even when the holiday coincided with a critical game. No matter how many anti-Semitic taunts and threats Greenberg endured, in the end he felt that they were nothing compared to the racism experienced by Jackie Robinson.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; April 20.)

MONSOON WEDDING

Mira Nair's new picture has been hailed as a feel-good spree, but it's better than that—a barely stable compound of the wounding, the confusing, and the appealing. The action takes place in Delhi, where a pair of middle-class parents (Lillete Dubey and Naseeruddin Shah) work themselves into a froth over the nuptials of their daughter (Vasundhara Das). Her marriage is, of course, arranged; for all the racket and buzz of the film's modernity, it finds time to make the suggestion—bewildering, perhaps, to audiences here—that from this archaic arrangement can spring an enduring love. The groom is flying in from Houston, Texas; another relative travels from Australia, and you brace yourself for the cultural collisions. The result is a comedy, but only just. India's stressful poise between orthodoxy and innovation (listen for the clash of peacock and cell phone) leads to a devastating family fracture that is only half-healed by the celebrations at the end. In English and Hindi.—*A.L.* (2/18 & 25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Paris, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.)

MONSTER'S BALL

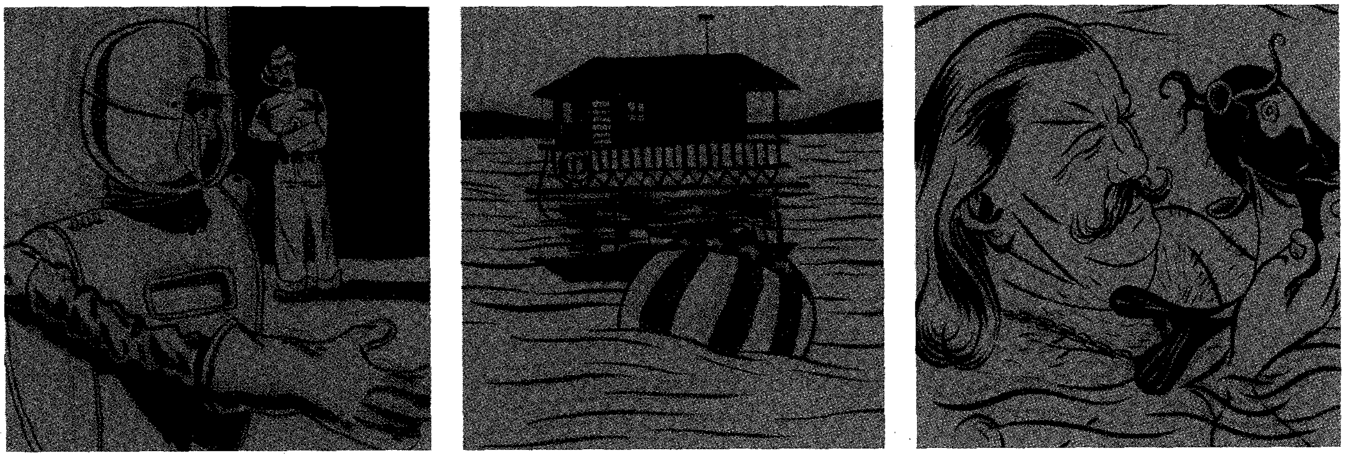
Marc Forster's movie delivers an unworkable paradox: the characters are inarticulate, damaged people who have led heedless and tragic lives—portrayed with bitter realism—and yet the plotting is sheer Hollywood in its schemes and coincidences. Billy Bob Thornton is the Georgia corrections officer who conducts the execution of the husband (Sean "P. Diddy" Combs) of a local waitress (Halle Berry) and then falls in love with the widow. The slow, reticent dramaturgy has its moments of authenticity, especially in the balanced interracial romance: Thornton is quiet and affecting and Berry acts up a storm.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

PANIC ROOM

The title of the new David Fincher film refers to a secure stronghold that is built into the walls of a New York house. Think of it as a safe, in which you lock your loved ones as well as your money. It is in one such room that a divorced mother (Jodie Foster) and her daughter (Kristen Stewart) take refuge when three burglars (Forest Whitaker, Dwight Yoakam, and Jared Leto) break in at night. From here on it's a game of cat and mouse, with the cat swinging a sledgehammer and the mice trying to reach their cell phone. The result is not so much scary as endlessly worrying; the movie was designed, propitiously, to suck in all the insecurities that you can imagine, and a few that you can't. What lends the ordeal its bite is the playoff between Whitaker, with his sluggish menace, and the tight-lipped, fretting Foster. Are you sure you locked up before going out to the theatre?—*A.L.* (4/8/02) (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE PIANO TEACHER

Michael Haneke's calmly lucid masterpiece is about a seemingly unmanageable subject: a sado-masochistic piano teacher, Professor Erika Kohut (Isabelle Huppert), who maintains a sternly proper façade at the Vienna Conservatory while tormenting and playing dirty tricks on her talented students. Erika lives in an apartment with her hysterically possessive mother (Annie Girardot)—the two take turns slapping each other—and she tries to control the insolently charming and handsome young piano student (Benoît Magimel) who wants to be her lover. She may be a certifiable nut straight



ZOHAR LAZAR

Chris Smith documents life in a converted missile silo and other unusual American dwellings in "Home Movie," opening April 26.

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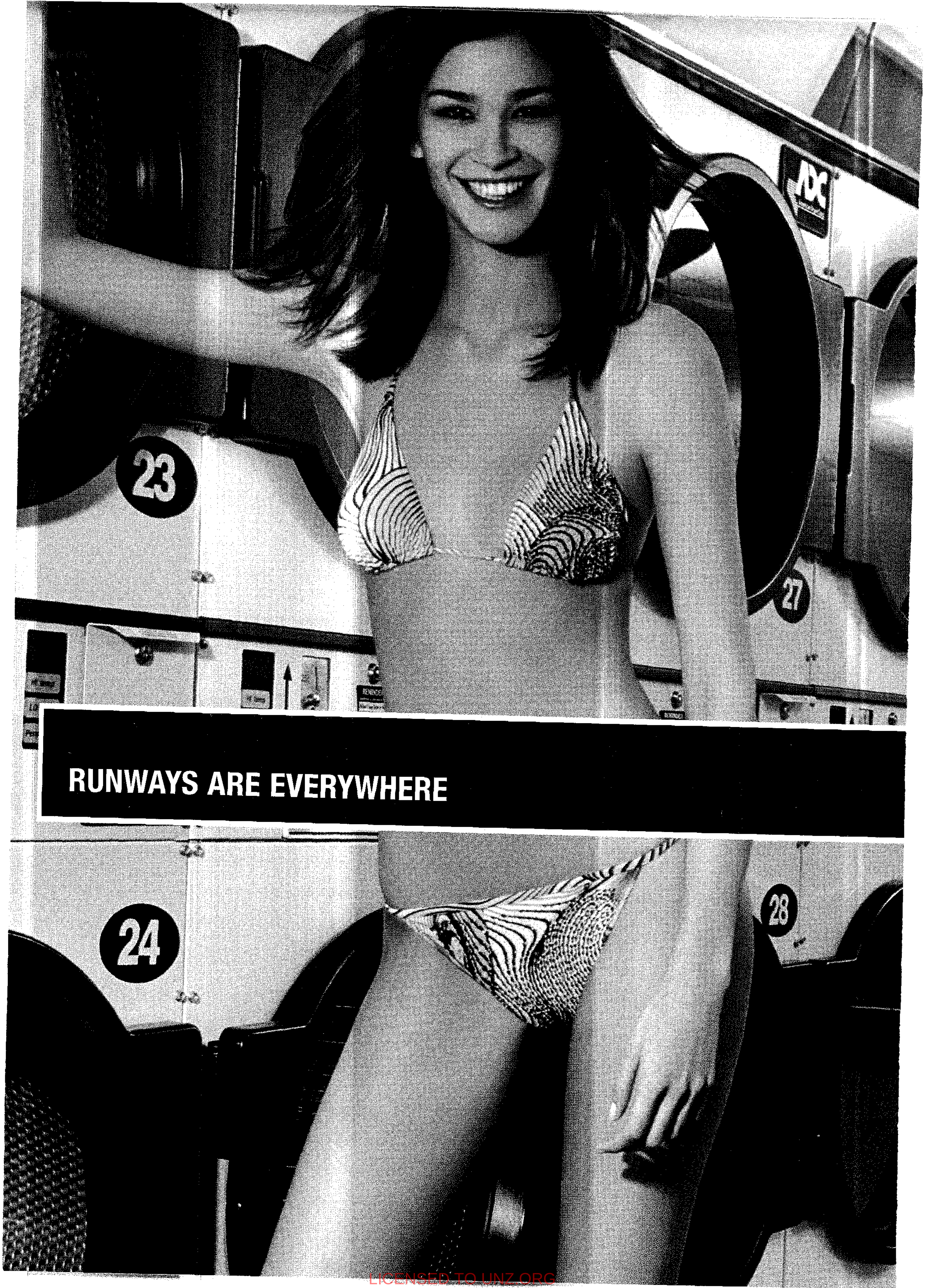
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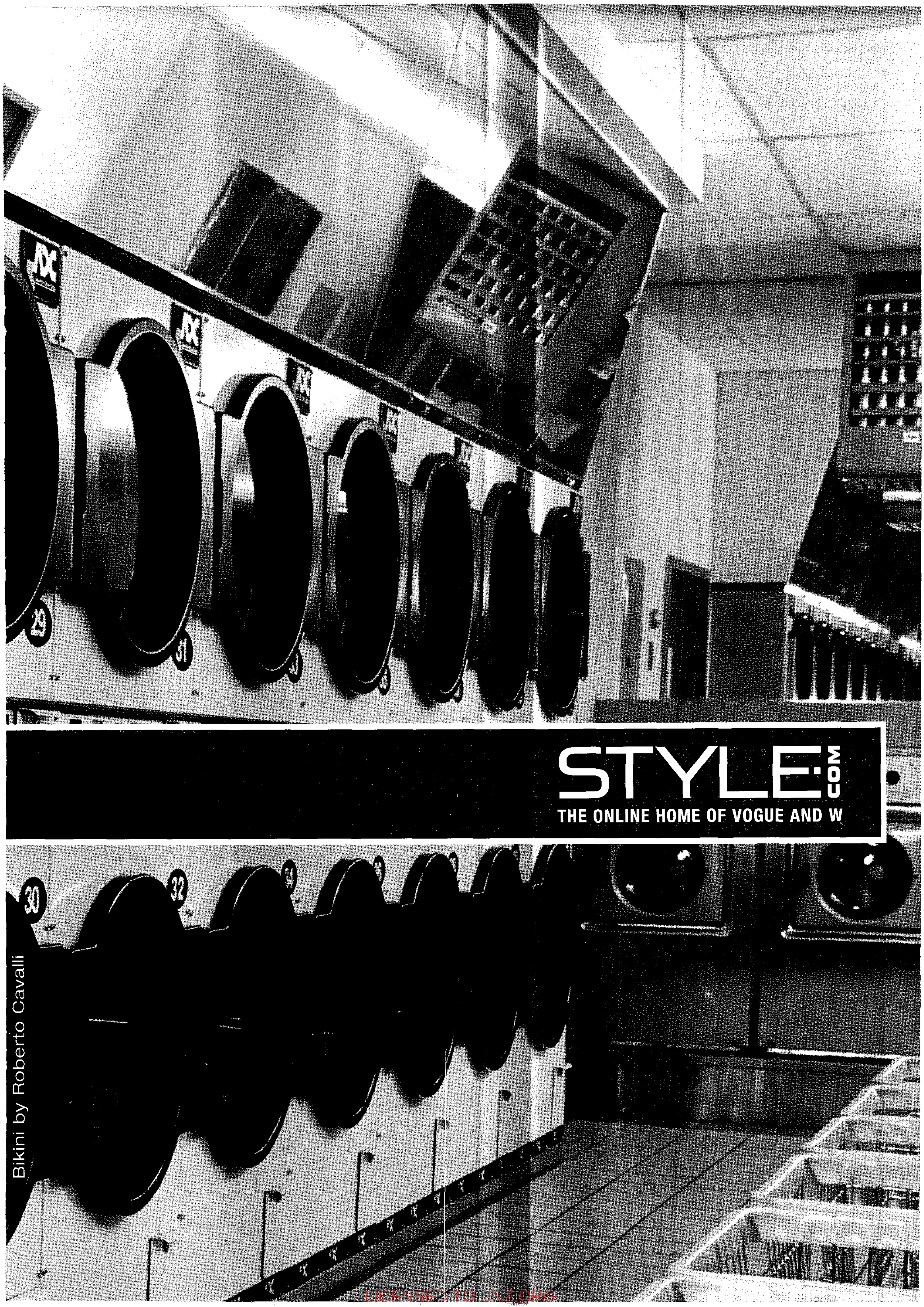
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out of clinical literature, but she's also a remarkable dramatic creation—an appalling but plausible human being brought to life by one of the world's bravest actresses. Huppert, whose masklike face seethes with rage, gives a classic account of repression and sexual hypocrisy. This is a genuinely shocking movie (one scene of self-mutilation is hard to take), but it's supremely intelligent, too, and there isn't a trace of sensationalism. Music by Bach, Schubert, and Brahms is central to the narrative. In French.—*D.D.* (4/1/02) (Cinema 2 and Cinema Village.)

PUZZLE OF A DOWNFALL CHILD

The title is enough to warn you that this 1970 picture is going to be literary in the worst sense, and it turns out to be about the anguished life of a high-fashion model (Faye Dunaway)—a lapsed Catholic, striving for grace and sleeping with strangers. The script by Carol Eastman, who wrote "Five Easy Pieces," is another tribute to alienation. Jerry Schatzberg has directed it in a fractured, prismatic style. Put them together and you've got the high-flown chic of soullessness. After you've looked at the heroine's teeny marble features for almost two hours, you're offered the conceit that perhaps she's an empty wreck because every time someone takes a picture of her she loses a piece of her soul. At twenty-four frames a second, this movie must have devastated Dunaway.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; April 20.)

THE ROOKIE

Dennis Quaid racks up another remarkable and underappreciated performance as the ballplayer Jim Morris, who reached the big leagues at an age when most pitchers are past their prime. John Lee Hancock's unfussy direction is spare and heartfelt, but the script, by Mike Rich, clogs up the movie with subplots that send the run time into extra innings. It's Quaid and his fellow actors, Rachel Griffiths and Brian Cox, who lift the film out of its intermittent doldrums, and together they deliver that rare thing: a nuanced sports movie.—*B.D.* (Chelsea West, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

TIME OUT

A quietly brilliant movie. Vincent (Aurélien Recoing), a fortyish French business consultant, gets canned from his job but refuses to tell his family. Instead he spends his time driving around the hushed, beautiful countryside near the Swiss border and showering his friends with business-school jargon ("restructuring" is a particular favorite). They take him for a U.N. official running private investments on the side, and he easily fleeces them. But there's no particular point to Vincent's swindles: he's a fantasist, a put-on artist who wants the freedom not to work, and he's unwilling to disappoint anybody. Laurent Cantet's movie starts as an anecdote about unemployment and turns into a meditation on modern work. What, after all, does it mean to labor in a global economy in which the First World players like Vincent seem to be constantly moving abstractions around on an endless flowchart of possibilities? The hidden joke in this gravely lyrical movie is that no one can tell the difference between Vincent's invented nonsense and the real nonsense. With Karin Viard as Vincent's wife and Serge Livrozet as a creepy smuggler who at least deals in tangible goods. In French.—*D.D.* (4/15/02). (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN

A new movie from the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón, who came to Hollywood to make "A Little Princess" and "Great Expectations" and who has now returned in triumph to his homeland. The story is a stripped-down road movie: two teen-age friends, one rich (Diego Luna) and one poor (Gael García Bernal), borrow a car and set off to find the perfect beach, in the company of a Spanish woman (Maribel Verdú) who is not merely older, but married. Plus, she seems inexplicably happy to take either, or both, of them to bed. All the boys' dreams, in other words, have come true, and they can hardly handle it. What ensues is a sad and sexy picaresque, as everyone's illusions are peeled off along with their clothes. Cuarón's style is so open and relaxed, and his actors are so attuned to one another, that not until the final scene, with its litany of revelations, do we see that what felt life-affirming has also been a meditation on the slide of time, and on the offstage presence of death. Unrated, and therefore full of proper sex, with all the improprieties intact. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (3/18/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas. Lincoln Plaza, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE CAT'S MEOW
Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Square, and 64th and 2nd.

CHANGING LANES
42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (3/25/02)
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Chelsea West, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.

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THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
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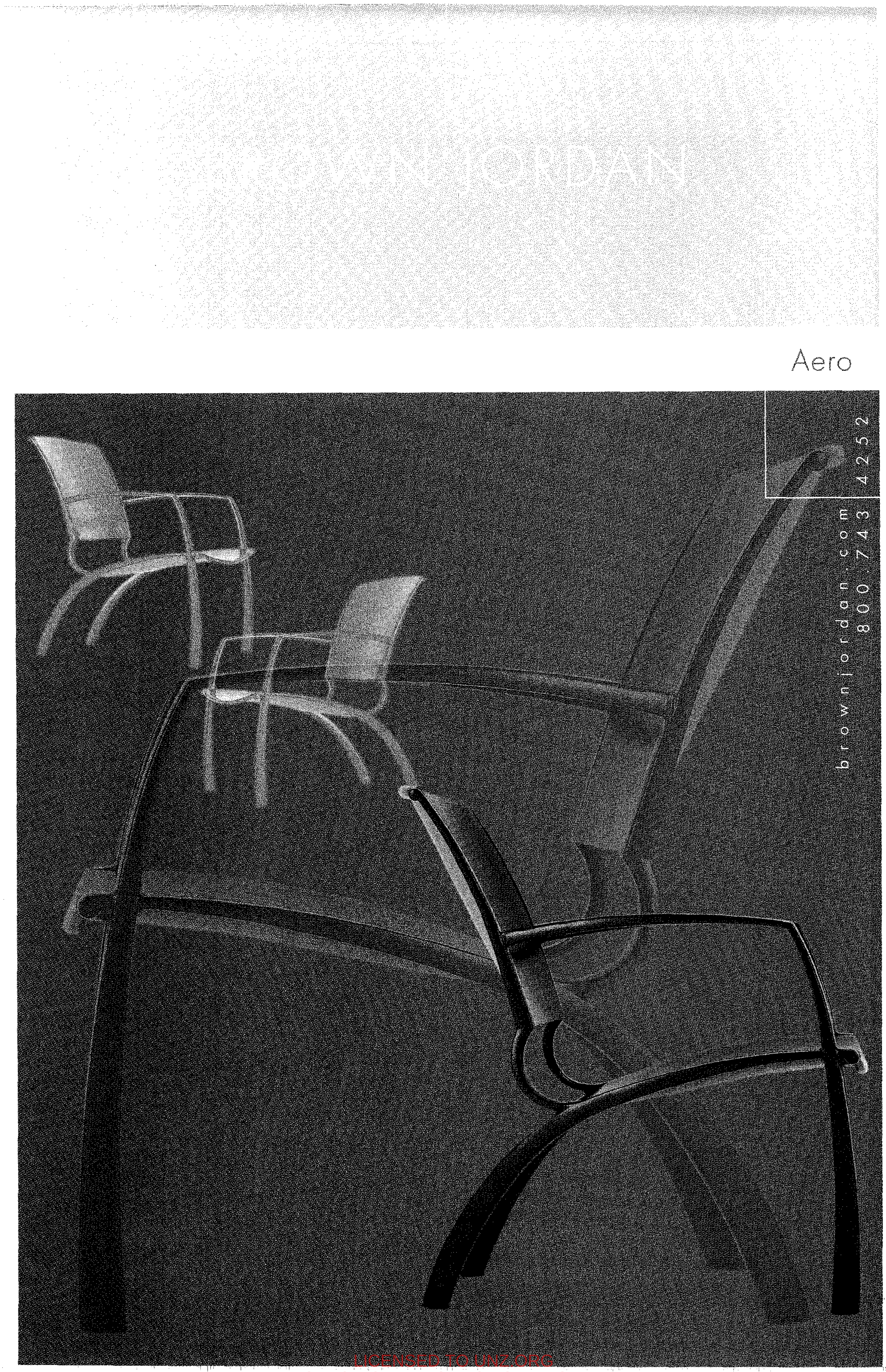
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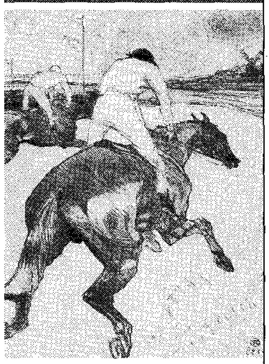

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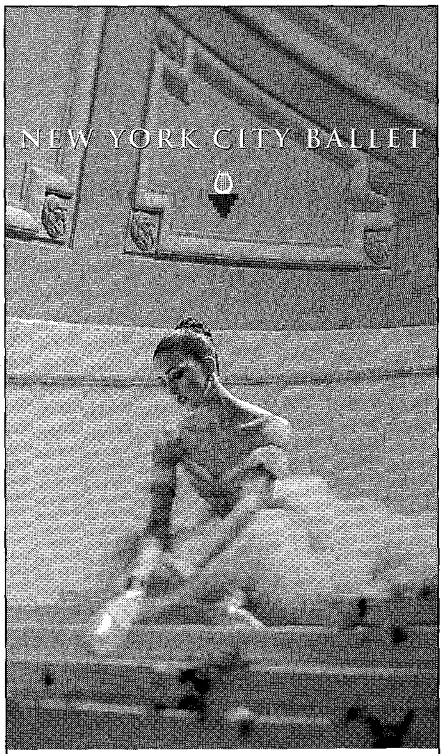

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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through May 5: "Hardboiled Hollywood." April 20 at 2: "Phantom Lady" (1944, Robert Siodmak). ♦ April 20 at 4: "The American Friend" (1977, Wim Wenders). ♦ April 27 at 2: "Kiss Me Deadly" (1955, Robert Aldrich). ♦ April 27 at 4: "Point Blank" (1967, John Boorman). ♦ April 28 at 2: "The Killing" (1956, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ April 28 at 4: "Coup de Torchon" (1981, Bertrand Tavernier; in French). ♦ Repertory nights. April 20-21 at 6:30: "Repulsion" (1965, Roman Polanski). ♦ April 27-28 at 6:30: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Through April 22: The Brooklyn Jewish Film Festival. April 17 at 7:30: "Yanna's Friends" (1999, Arik Kaplun; in Hebrew and Russian). ♦ April 18 at 4:30 and April 19 at 6:30: "Strange Fruit" (2002, Joel Katz). ♦ April 18 at 6 and April 19 at 4: "Jazzman from the Gulag" (1999, Pierre-Henry Salfati). ♦ April 18 at 8:30: "Mama Drama: The Jewish Mother in Cinema" (2001, Monique Schwartz). ♦ April 19 at 8:30 and April 22 at 4:30: "Brownsville Black and White" (2000, Richard Broadman). ♦ April 20 at 3: "The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg" (†). ♦ April 20 at 6:15: "The Komediant" (†). ♦ April 20 at 8:30: "The Jazz Singer" (1927, Alan Crosland). ♦ April 21 at 2: "Nothing But a Man" (1964, Michael Roemer). ♦ April 21 at 5: "Fires in the Mirror" (1992, George C. Wolfe). ♦ April 21 at 8: "American Matchmaker" (1940, Edgar G. Ulmer). ♦ April 22 at 6:20: "Black to the Promised Land" (1991, Madeleine Ali). ♦ April 22 at 8:40: "Trembling Before G-d" (2001, Sandi DuBowski). ♦ Forties noir. April 23 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Phantom Lady" (1944, Robert Siodmak). ♦ April 30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Christmas Holiday" (1944, Siodmak). ♦ An Anne-Marie Miéville retrospective. All films are in French. April 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Lou Didn't Say No" (1994). ♦ April 26 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "We Are Still Here" (1997). ♦ April 27 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Reaching an Understanding" (2000). ♦ April 28 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "My Dear Subject" (1988).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through June 6: "The Great American Comedy." April 17 at 1, 4:25, and 7:50: "Sons of the Desert" (1933, William A. Seiter). ♦ April 17 at 2:45, 6:10, and 9:35: "Way Out West" (1937, James Horne). ♦ April 18-20 at 3, 6:40, and 10:25: "Blazing Saddles" (1974, Mel Brooks). ♦ April 18-20 at 1, 4:45, and 8:30: "Young Frankenstein" (1974, Brooks). ♦ April 21 at 1: "Skinner's Dress Suit" (1926, Seiter). ♦ April 21 at 4:35 and 8:10 and April 22 at 1:20 and 4:45: "The Thin Man" (1934, W. S. Van Dyke). ♦ April 21 at 2:50, 6:25, and 10 and April 22 at 3:10: "The Awful Truth" (1937, Leo McCarey). ♦ April 22 at 7 and 8:40: "Grandma's Boy" (1922, Fred C. Newmeyer). ♦ April 23 at 3:30, 6:45, and 10:10: "Steamboat Bill, Jr." (1928, Charles Riesner). ♦ April 23 at 2, 5:15, and 8:30: "The Patsy" (1928, King Vidor). ♦ April 24 at 3:40 and 7:40: "Heaven Can Wait" (1943, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ April 24 at 1:45, 5:45, and 9:50: "Cluny Brown" (†). ♦ April 25 at 3:10, 6:45, and 10:20: "Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein" (1948, Charles Barton). ♦ April 25 at 1:15, 4:50, and 8:25: "The Three Stooges Follies," classic shorts. ♦ April 26-27 at 1, 5:20, and 9:40: "Some Like It Hot"

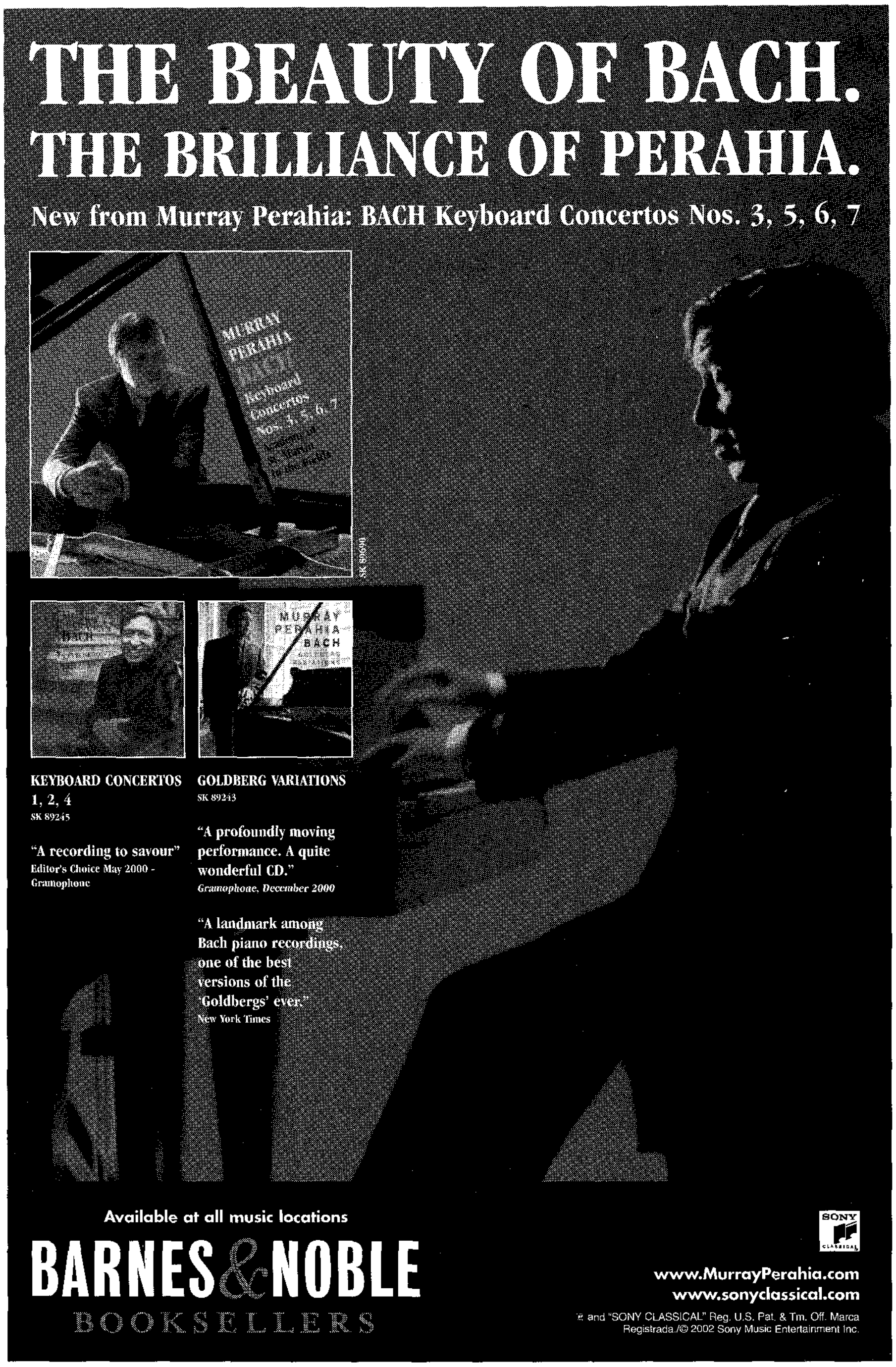
(1959, Billy Wilder). ♦ April 26-27 at 3:15 and 7:35: "One, Two, Three" (1961, Wilder). ♦ April 28 at 1: "Paths to Paradise" (1925, Clarence G. Badger). ♦ April 28 at 4:40 and 8:20 and April 29 at 1:10 and 4:50: "Destry Rides Again" (†). ♦ April 28 at 3, 6:40, and 10:20 and April 29 at 3:10: "My Little Chickadee" (1939, Edward Cline). ♦ April 29 at 7 and 8:40: "Why Worry?" (1923, Newmeyer). ♦ April 30 at 2:55, 6:30, and 10:05: "Sitting Pretty" (1948, Walter Lang). ♦ April 30 at 1, 4:35, and 8:10: "Champagne for Caesar" (1950, Richard Whorf).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through May 21: "The Mysterious World of Jacques Rivette." April 23 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Up, Down, Fragile" (1994; in French). ♦ April 30 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Céline and Julie Go Boating" (1974; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Restored Italian classics. April 18 at 2:30 and April 21 at 2: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini). ♦ April 19 at 2:30 and April 20 at 5: "Love à la Carte" (1960, Antonio Pietrangeli). ♦ April 19 and April 22 at 6: "Two Women" (1961, Vittorio de Sica). ♦ April 20 at 2: "Io, Io, Io . . . e gli Altri" (1966, Alessandro Blasetti; in Italian). ♦ April 21 at 5 and April 23 at 2:30: "The Grim Reaper" (†). ♦ April 22 at 2:30: "Red Desert" (1964, Michelangelo Antonioni). ♦ April 22 at 6: "I Vitelloni" (1953, Fellini). ♦ April 23 at 6: "The Facts of Murder" (1959, Pietro Germi). ♦ The films of David O. Russell. April 25 at 2:30 and April 26 at 6: "Flirting with Disaster" (1996). ♦ April 25 at 6 and April 27 at 2: "Spanking the Monkey" (1994). ♦ April 26 at 2:30 and April 27 at 5: "Three Kings" (1999). ♦ Three from the archives. April 28 at 2 and April 30 at 2:30: "Smiles of a Summer Night" (1955, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ April 28 at 5 and April 29 at 2:30: "True Heart Susie" (1919, D. W. Griffith). ♦ April 30 at 6: "Cotton Candy" (2001, Ernie Gehr).

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Through July 21: Classic French cinema. April 20-21 at 1: "Children of Paradise" (1944, Marcel Carné). ♦ April 27-28 at 1, 5:15, and 7:30: "Jules and Jim" (1961, François Truffaut). ♦ April 27-28 at 3: "François Truffaut: Stolen Portraits" (1993, Michel Pascal).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through May 5: "After the War, Before the Wall: German Cinema, 1945-60." All films are in German. April 17 at 1, 5, and 9: "Fanfares of Love" (1951, Kurt Hoffmann). ♦ April 17 at 3 and 7: "The Affairs of Dr. Holl" (1951, Rolf Hansen). ♦ April 18 at 1, April 21 at 6:30, and April 24 at 5: "Roses Bloom on the Grave in the Meadow" (1952, Hans H. König). ♦ April 18 at 2:50 and April 21 at 4:30 and 8:30: "Toxi" (1952, Robert A. Stemmle). ♦ April 23 at 1, 5:10 and 9:15: "Sissi" (1955, Ernst Marischka). ♦ April 23 at 3:10 and 7:20: "Bonjour Kathrin" (1955, Karl Anton). ♦ April 24 at 1 and 7: "I Often Think of Piroschka" (1955, Hoffmann). ♦ April 24 at 3 and 9: "Sky Without Stars" (1955, Helmut Käutner). ♦ April 25 at 1 and 5:15 and April 27 at 4: "The Hooligans" (1956, Georg Tressler). ♦ April 25 at 3, April 27 at 8:30, and April 28 at 1: "The Trapp Family in America" (1958, Wolfgang Liebeneiner). ♦ April 26 at 1, 5, and 9: "The Heart of St. Pauli" (1957, Eugen York). ♦ April 26 at 3 and 7: "The Spessart Inn" (1957, Hoffmann). ♦ April 27 at 2 and April 28 at 7:45: "Widower with Five Daughters" (1957, Erich Engels). ♦ April 27 at 6: "Sharks and Small Fish" (1957, Frank Wisbar). ♦ April 28 at 3:15: "The Devil Strikes at Night" (1957, Robert Siodmak). ♦ April 28 at 5:30 and April 30 at 1: "When Conny and Peter . . ." (1958, Fritz Umgelter). ♦ A weekend with Faye Dunaway. April 19 at 1: "Network" (1976, Sidney Lumet). ♦ April 19 at 6:15: "The Yellow Bird" (2001, Dunaway). ♦ April 19 at 3:50 and April 20 at 9:30: "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967, Arthur Penn). ♦ April 19 at 9:15 and April 21 at 1:30: "Chinatown" (1974, Roman Polanski). ♦ April 20 at 5 and 7:15: "Puzzle of a Downfall Child" (†).



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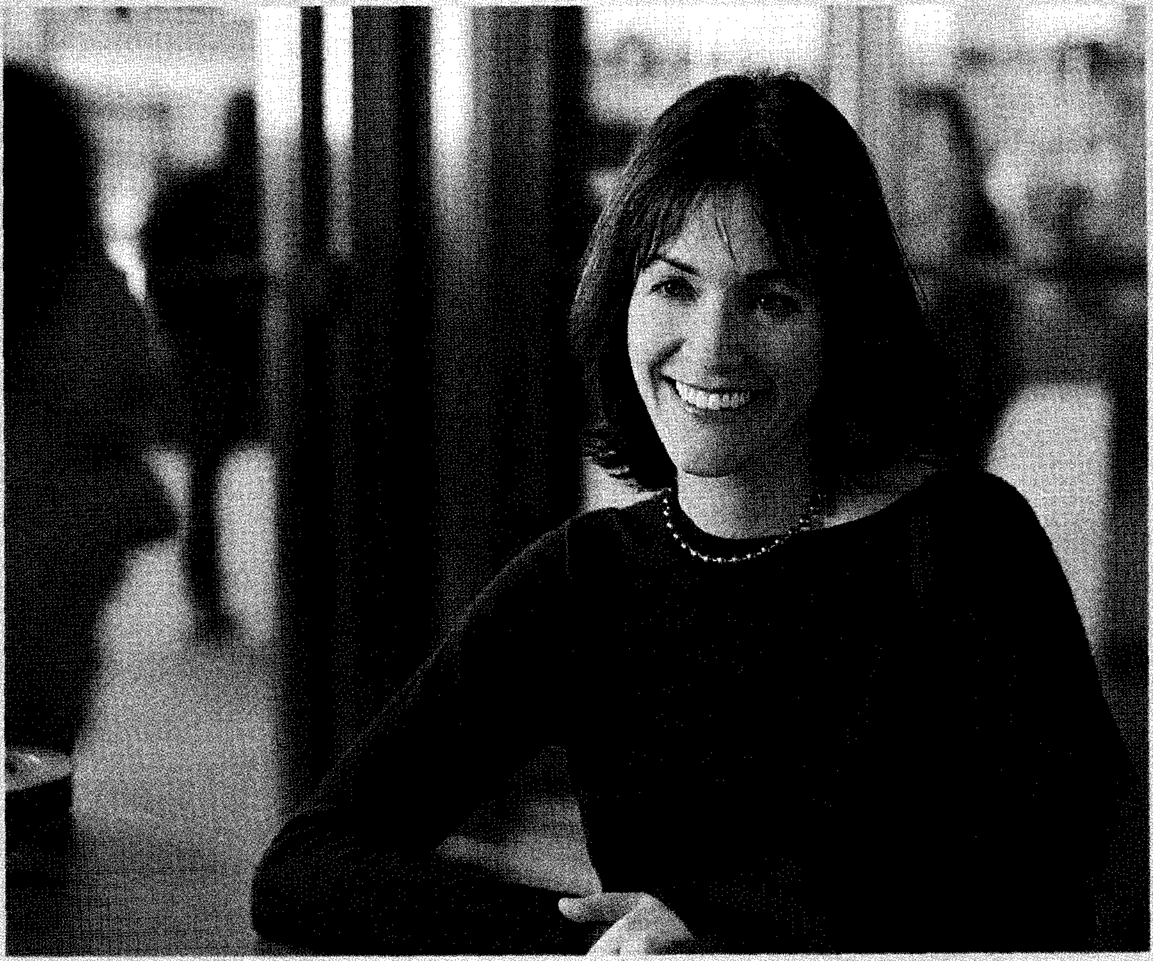

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

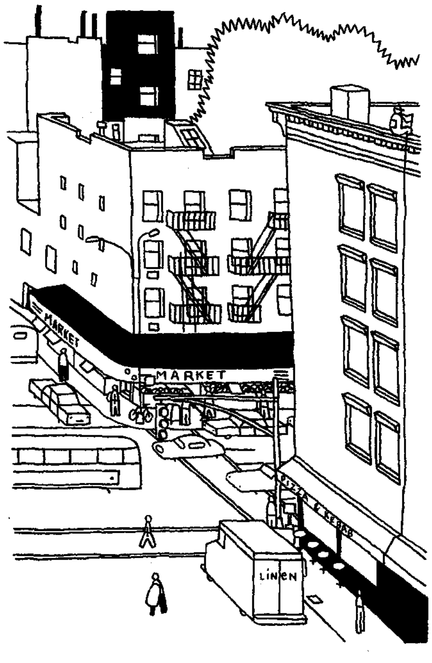
COMMENT
TWO STATES

Like any great tragedy, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is full of smaller sadnesses. One of these is that, as the Israeli tanks have rolled through the West Bank, discussion of the conflict has begun to take the form of horror stories about whichever side is the enemy: the orders placed for explosives, the crushed houses and cars, the baby stillborn at a checkpoint, the bombers blown up on the way to kill more people. This is not yet an all-out war—in all-out wars, we should remind ourselves before completely giving in to despair, many more people die than have died in Israel and Palestine since the second Intifada began—but it is close enough to produce the pattern of thinking that leads to wars, the mutual conviction that the other side has moved morally beyond the pale.

It is difficult for Americans to imagine their way into the Middle East: it feels as if we were being presented with two competing stories of a people's absolute righteousness (in both the grand historical sense and the day-to-day atrocity sense) and asked to choose which one to believe. Americans aren't used to making choices like that. But it may be useful to contemplate some similarities—historically inexact but emotionally resonant—with a dismal period in our own history: post-Civil War Reconstruction in the South.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

In 1865, the United States won a crushing victory over the Confederate States of America, just as Israel won the Six-Day War, in 1967. Then the government commenced a military occupation of the land it had conquered. Just as the Civil War had two intertwined rationales, union and the abolition of slavery, the occupation during Reconstruction had two rationales, national security and guaranteeing the citizenship rights of the former slaves. (One upside-down aspect of the comparison is that, if the South was America's West Bank, the conquering power's settler equivalents, the carpetbaggers, represented the political left, not the right. Another is that the most obviously oppressed people in the American story, the former slaves, were much more concerned with establishing political and economic rights than with claiming a homeland.) The former Confederates, having lost their recourse to conventional military power as a result of having lost the war, turned to terrorism as the means to their political ends. All through Reconstruction, and particularly toward the end, the South went through cycles of terrorist violence—by the Ku Klux Klan and, later, the White League and similar organizations, against the carpetbaggers and politically active African-Americans—followed by military crackdowns.



For most of this period, the United States was led by a politically unsophisticated career military man who had personally conquered much of the occupied territory and was sympathetic to the goals of the settlers, Ulysses S. Grant. The occupation proceeded in a heartbreaking fashion: the longer it went on, the bolder the terrorists became, and the less general support there was for it. In the fall of 1875, Grant declined the entreaties of Adelbert Ames, Mississippi's carpetbagger governor, to send troops to monitor an election campaign. Less than two years later, as part of a deal struck to resolve the disputed Presidential election of 1876, all federal troops were withdrawn from the South, not to return (for civil-rights purposes) until the Little

Rock school crisis of 1957. The Jim Crow system was the inexorable outcome. The United States decided, in effect, to let the South undo one result of the Civil War, black citizenship, in exchange for keeping the other results, union and abolition. The collapse of Reconstruction was clearly an example of the terrorists winning.

Reinforcing this political victory was a narrative victory, with the South's preferred version of the Reconstruction story prevailing in American culture and intellectual life (political correctness in those days ran in the opposite direction from now) well past the midpoint of the twentieth century: white freedom fighters had overthrown an illegitimate regime and reëstablished the sacred principle of self-determination. As late as 1956—after Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s Montgomery bus boycott had begun—John F. Kennedy, by way of making himself a national figure, devoted a chapter in "Profiles in Courage" to the mastermind of Reconstruction's demise in Mississippi, Senator Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar.

What the story of our long-running version of the two-state solution demonstrates about the United States is that our history has been consistently more difficult than we like to remember. What it demonstrates about the wider world is that if you've got what the white South had—a passionate ethno-nationalist claim to a homeland, a willingness to resort to terrorist violence, and a story line that the world finds persuasive, in part because it plays into existing ethnic prejudices—then you've probably got a winning hand, whether or not the interests you are seeking to advance are noble.

In the Middle East, because we are already deep into the realm of having to contemplate imperfect measures that might forestall disaster, rather than solutions that anybody would find morally satisfying, the American example offers a hope, though a distant one. The occupation forces in the South withdrew because remaining had become politically unsustainable. The result was that the South became almost a separate country again, and then, slowly, its main project changed, from promoting violence and revenge to rebuilding social and economic structures. Over a very long haul, that made it possible, when the civil-rights movement came along, for white Southerners to begin to acknowledge the humanity of their enemies, as they would not during Reconstruction. Withdrawing Israeli troops and settlers and recognizing Palestinian statehood may also seem a reward for terrorism, but there aren't any clean choices right now. At least then the Palestinian government would have a lot more to lose, and such a stake has a salutary—if not, alas, swift—effect on behavior.

—Nicholas Lemann

STRING SECTION

SLAVA AT SEVENTY-FIVE

The voice of the man who answered a phone call from the lobby of a midtown hotel last week was unmistakably that of Mstislav Rostropovich. "Helllloooo!" it roared. "Yes, you are early, but come up, please, now. Floor feeefty-two!" The Maestro had just arrived to play the Dvořák Cello Concerto and the American première of a concerto by the young French composer Eric Tanguy with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, at Carnegie Hall. He opened the door to his suite and delivered another hello that might have come from an entire double-bass section. Dressed in a chocolate-brown three-piece suit with red-and-silver pinstripes, he looked remarkably hale for a man who had just turned seventy-five. "Soooo," he said, after taking a seat at the head of the dining table. "I don't think about living so long. When I am thirty-five years old, I feel life is so long—so lonnng! After that, so short!"

Two weeks ago, Rostropovich celebrated his birthday with a gala concert at the Barbican Centre, in London, where he was fêted by a galaxy of musical colleagues. Now he was more interested in celebrating the memory of three composers who had written major cello pieces for him—Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Britten. "They are the greatest musical figures in my life," he said. "And one is completely not like the other!

"Shostakovich," he said, furrowing his brow, "was a genius, but an unhappy man, because he understood the political realities. He knew that we have to glorify our superiors, but with music they can understand.

"Britten," he said, breaking into a grin. "A nice Englishman! So good manners! A wonderful friend!

"And Prokofiev," he growled, leaning forward. "He was naïve, like a child—a very interesting personality. You know, he liked perfume very much. Whenever I travelled, he asked me to bring him back a fragrance. He very much wanted a French fragrance. It was called . . ." With long, tapering fingers, he tried to pluck the missing name out of the air.

"Chanel?" I suggested.

"No!"

"Patou?"

"No!"

"Guerlain?"

Rostropovich clapped his hands. "That's it!" he said. "Unfortunately, I only went to France after Prokofiev died."

"What was Prokofiev's personality like?" I asked.

Rostropovich leaned forward. "Prokofiev was like an animal, a . . ." His fingers grasped the air. The hand came down. "*Yozhik!*"

"*Yozhik*?"

"A . . ." The hand went up.

"Fox?"

"No!"

"Cat?"

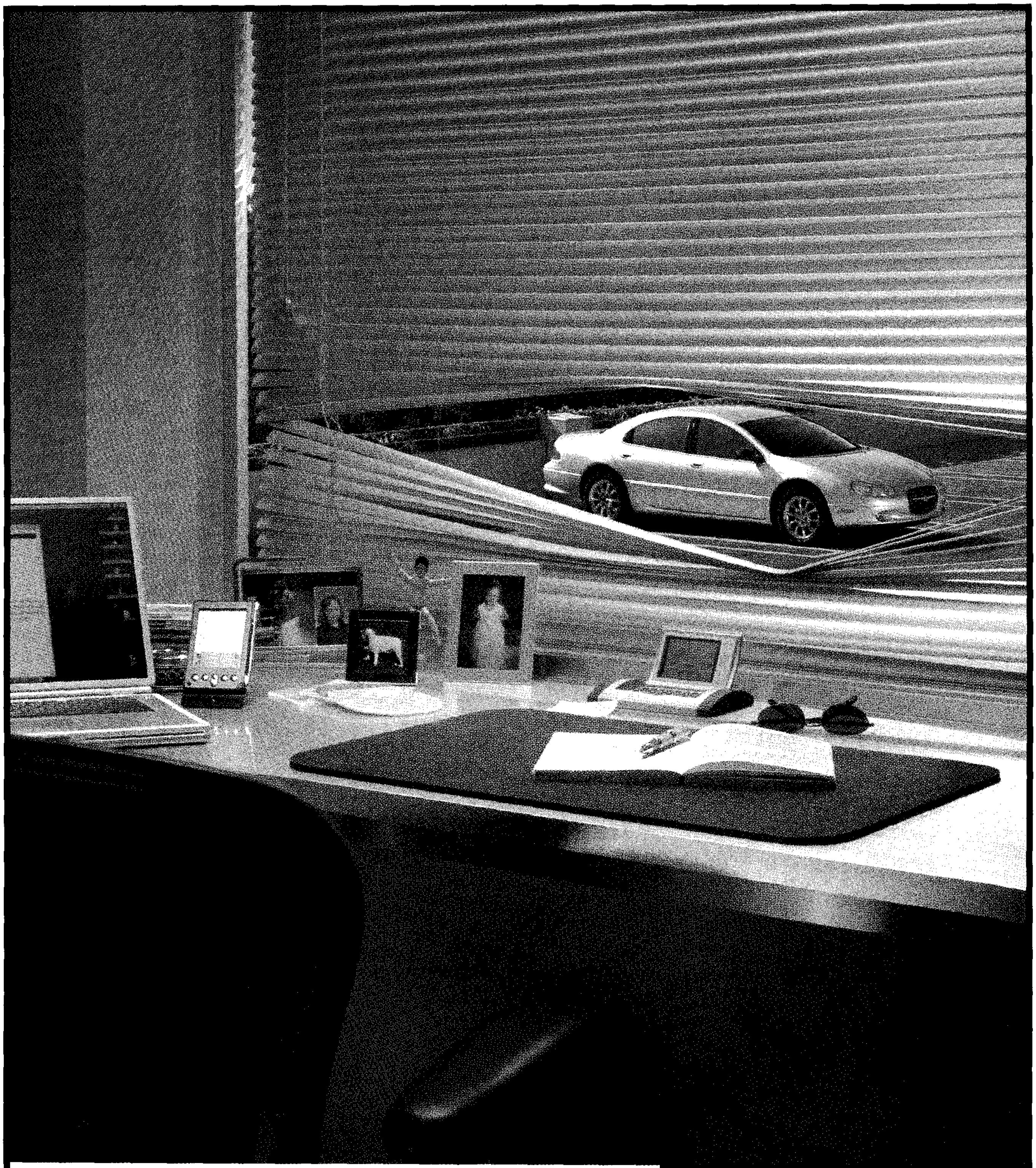
"No!" Rostropovich grabbed my notebook and pen and drew a *yozhik:* a small round animal with lots of spiky quills.

"Ah! Prokofiev was like a porcupine! Would you sign this?"

Rostropovich scrawled "MR" under the porcupine. The "M" was half the size of the "R," which ended in a sweeping line that suggested the cellist's final flourish in the Dvořák concerto.

In 1990, Rostropovich and his wife, the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, returned to Russia, after spending sixteen years as defectors in the West. They now live mainly in St. Petersburg, in a duplex apartment that previously housed more than a hundred tenants. The renovation took four years, Rostropovich said, and he managed to find new places for everyone who had been dispossessed.

"Soul," a word that has been associated with Rostropovich's playing ever since he made his professional solo début, at the age of thirteen, began to creep into the conversation. He used it when



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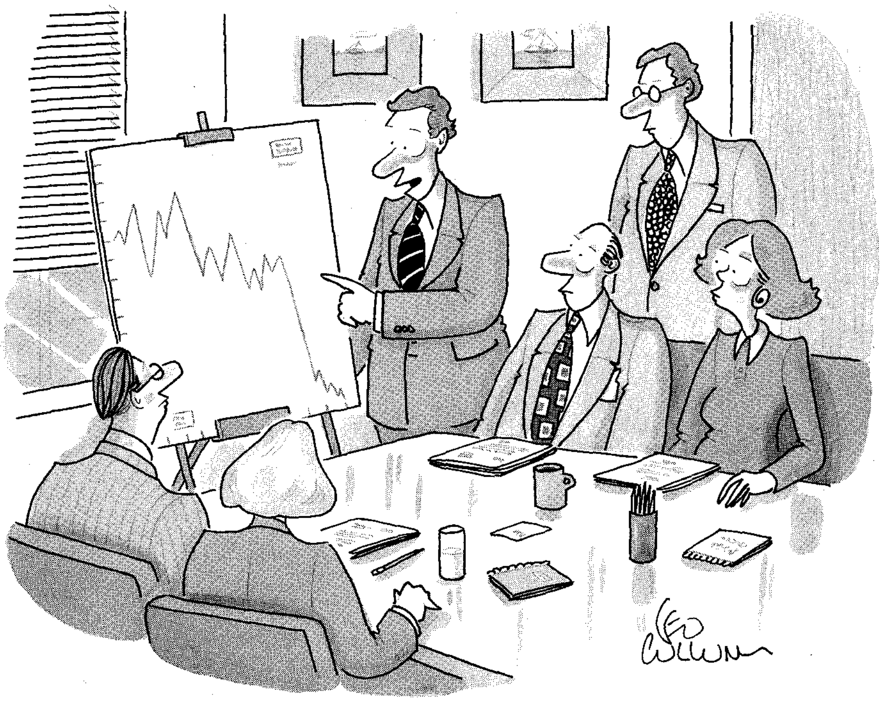


"The dip in sales seems to coincide with the decision to eliminate the sales staff."

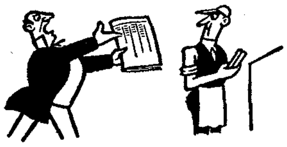
• •

he discussed the key ingredients of the music of men like Shostakovich, whose works, he said, revealed their true stature only after the composers' death. (Next week, he will conduct three all-Shostakovich concerts at Avery Fisher Hall.) And he cited "soul" as a product of his years as one of the Soviet era's most outspoken dissidents. "Comfort, celebrity are no good for the artist," he said. "If Beethoven were alive today, he wouldn't compose a single note, because the people would give him so many sponsorships, corporate gifts, and honorary doctorates." (He himself, he admitted, had received fifty honorary degrees.) "If I had not endured those terrible years, I would have been maybe a good cellist, but not the one I became. Difficult times are necessary for a good performance—the big spill of emotion, from tragedy to enormous joy."

When I got up to leave, I tried to shake Rostropovich's hand. Instead, he leaned forward and planted successive kisses on each of my cheeks. After the second kiss, I pulled back, but Rostropovich wasn't finished. "One more," he said, planting a third kiss. "The Russian way!"

—*Charles Michener*

INK
THE *TIMES*, V.O.



Those members of the New York newspaper-reading public who rise bleary-eyed at seven every morning to go and search for the previous day's edition of the great Paris daily *Le Monde* (a group that probably numbers in the low one figure) got a shock with their orange juice the other morning. Deep in the pages of the April 7th edition—along with the usual highly philosophical op-ed pieces and highly condensed sports section and highly condescending editorials—there was, well, us. Not us, exactly, but one of our neighbors: a twelve-page insert from the *Times*, a digest of the past week's stories, photographs, and reviews. There it was, bound into the voice of the French establishment: the familiar *Times* Gothic banner, its section heads, its bylines, even its charming way of slipping a photograph of a half-dressed babe (Kate Moss, in this case) into the paper under the rubric of social inquiry (are we fair to fat women?).

And—this is the part that is not just shocking but earthshaking, suggesting comets bouncing off the heads of dinosaurs, the Lisbon earthquake, and the storming of the Bastille—the entire supplement, created for the French edition, was published *in English. Le Monde* was announcing, blandly, that it now expected its readers to spend some time every week reading American news as Americans see it, in American (which is what the paper often calls our language). If one imagined the *Times* asking its readers to read twelve pages of French every week, one would still not comprehend the scale of this new idea, since the *Times* (a) wouldn't do it and (b) is not published in a country where a belligerent defensiveness about the national language is a defining characteristic.

Two questions immediately presented themselves: what would the *Times* look like in a *Mondean* context, and how the hell were the editors of *Le Monde* going to justify this to their readers? The first question was easy: the *Times*, surrounded by the French pages, looked virtuous and sincere, and even a little wide-eyed, like a Henry James hero entering a Paris hotel. Where the pages of *Le Monde* were, as always, devoted to standing conventional wisdom on its head, so that all the blood just pools there while the writer waves his feet in the air, the *Times* stood up and told it straight. (Even when the *Times* was being philosophical, it looked innocent. Might America be an empire? one writer wondered. *Le Monde's* readers settled *that* question in their own minds long ago.) The "news" stories in the French paper tended to flit by the news on the way to a Higher Theory, but the American paper was as fact-filled as a science project; you almost expected to see a blue ribbon pinned to it.

The day's lead editorial in *Le Monde*—written, presumably, by Jean-Marie Colombani, the editor-in-chief, or one of his *adjoints*—was entitled "Plusieurs Mondes," or "Many Worlds," and devoted itself entirely to the question Why English? *Le Monde* looked the question over, raised its hauteur, and then patted itself on the back: "In the battle against the uniformization of the world, bilingualism—or multilingualism—is a weapon that maintains diversity. It's the strategy of the weak toward the strong:

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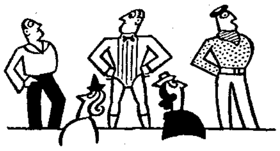
mastering the language of dominant usage permits one to better defend the identity of one's own language." And then, in a mildly mischievous tone, *Le Monde* hinted that the *Times* was, like it, an organ of the great Centrist Consensus: "Nothing could be worse, in the uncertain period that began on September 11th, than to identify the American people as a whole, and the American press, with the policies followed by the *Maison Blanche*. To discover the New York *Times*, especially in the original version, is to know Americans better in all their diversity. It is to understand their vision of the world, which is both like and unlike our own, and is definitely more complex, more open, less self-absorbed than the impression one gets from the State Department or the Pentagon."

According to Tom Carley, the president of the News Services division of the *Times*, the supplement is being published on a trial basis. There had been conversations about doing the insert in French, but *Le Monde* insisted on English. Yet, after the shock of the thing passed, it was impossible not to keep thinking about the last paragraph of *Le Monde's* editorial, which ended in a genuinely noble and memorable manner. "What menaces us all at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in France, as in the United States, but also in Israel, as in Palestine, in India, as in Pakistan," the editors wrote, "is the isolating of the Other in his identity—national, ethnic, or religious. . . . To better know the Other in his own language and his own imagination is not to renounce oneself. It is, on the contrary, to accept the plurality of worlds, the diversity of visions, and, above all, a respect for differences." A recondite literary allusion lies in the phrase "plurality of worlds": it comes from the title of one of the great books of the French Enlightenment, Bernard Le Bovier Fontenelle's seventeenth-century "Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds," which is one of the first published works of popular science. Fontenelle explored the idea that there might be many worlds out there in the universe, with many tongues and many points of view, to suggest, subversively, that it would be only natural to expect lots of points of view, tongues, and ideas down here on earth, too. It remains an—no, *the*—enlightened thought.

—Adam Gopnik

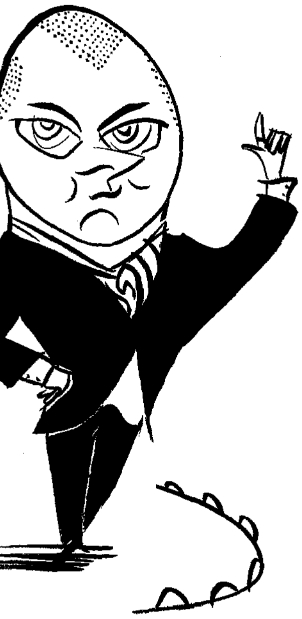
THE BOARDS
MAN IN TIGHTS



Back in December, Andrew Sullivan—the author, Tory sympathizer, fixed point on the punditry circuit, and a-thousand-words-a-day contributor to his Internet me-zine AndrewSullivan.com—got an invitation from Michael Comlish, a director with the Washington Shakespeare Company, asking if he wanted to audition for an upcoming production of "Much Ado About Nothing." On a lark, Sullivan went in to read and ended up with the part of Benedick, a leading role. "I was surprised," Sullivan said. "People in D.C. think they know me just because they've seen me on television talking about the Florida recount or about gay issues. Strangers come up and act so familiar it's almost as if they dated me."

"Initially, I confess I was really interested in Andrew's public persona, but having him in the play isn't just about celebrity," Comlish said the other night during a rehearsal at the company's theatre, in Arlington, Virginia, where the play will open on April 23rd. "I don't know how Andrew feels about the analogy of John Waters putting Patty Hearst in his movies, but it's much more complicated than that anyway. It was completely intuitive, this idea."

Sullivan raised his fingers to imply quotation marks, and said, "It's a meta-moment. My doing this play, it's so meta I shouldn't even talk about it, because then it becomes, like, double-meta." He went on, "Benedick does represent a kind of person who's quite common in D.C.: extremely articulate, highly intelligent, but emotionally unavailable and immature." Besides himself, he named a number of prominent political journalists. "Except he's a lot more interesting than most people in Washington." He named some more.



Andrew Sullivan, as Benedick.

TOM BACHTELL

Comlish was wearing suède sport-mocs and a plaid shirt half unbuttoned, so that it had slipped down one arm, exposing a shoulder. He led the actors through a few scenes. There was the tricking-of-Benedick scene, in which Sullivan mostly watched from the sidelines. Later, there was a scene in which Benedick comes onstage with the declaration that he has a toothache. Sullivan gave it an impetuous, pouty delivery. "Andrew," Comlish said. "This is your 'Raging Bull' part. You tear across the stage."

"So I'm, like, furious now?" Sullivan said. He lifted his T-shirt, which read "Dirty White Boy," and puffed out his stomach.

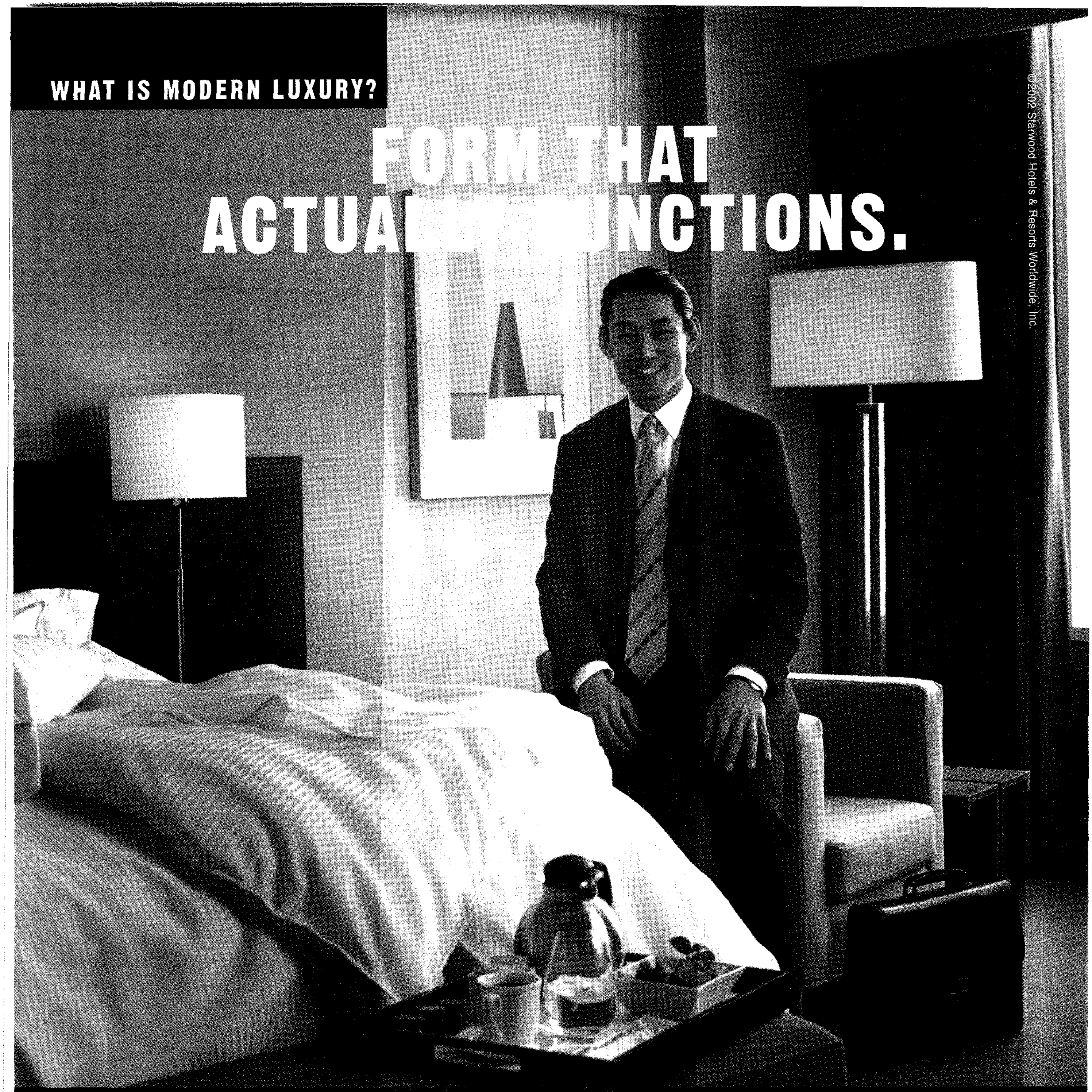
"Think angry. A little less complainy."

There was also the scene where Benedick belittles Claudio's interest in Hero, deeming her "too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise." After a couple of takes, Sullivan said, "See? Benedick is politically incorrect, like I am. And he's getting away with it because he's kind of charming."

Actually, Sullivan has been onstage many times before. "Most people don't know that when I was a graduate student at Harvard I was sort of mainly famous as an actor, which is the weird thing," he said. "Most people have no idea." He rattled off a list of credits that included playing Mozart in "Amadeus," Hamlet in "Hamlet," and Guy Bennett in an Oxford production of "Another Country"; three seasons at the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain; and, when he was eight, a tryout for the lead role in the movie version of "The Little Prince."

"I'd never read 'Much Ado' before this," he said. "It's fantastic. Plus I get to wear leather pants. And when the reviews come out I'm going to write my reviews of the reviews the next day on my Web site."

—Eric Konigsberg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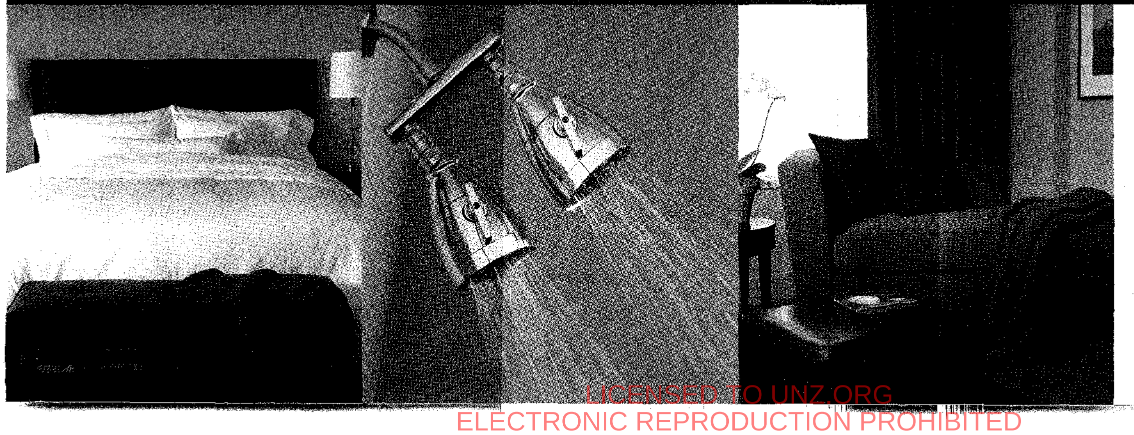

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

TAX CHEAT, INC.

Mark Vicini was a local boy made good. In the early nineteen-nineties, this Monmouth County, New Jersey, entrepreneur built a computer company, Micro Rental & Sales, into a thriving business. He became a millionaire. He put a disabled relative through college. He gave to charities. But he did not give to the Internal Revenue Service. As Micro Rental boomed, Vicini funnelled a good portion of his profits into an account at an offshore bank in the Cayman Islands—nine million dollars between 1991 and 1994, six million of which he hid from the I.R.S.

Unfortunately, of all the shady banks in all the Caymans, Vicini had to walk into John Mathewson's. In 1996, Mathewson, the chairman of Guardian Bank & Trust, was arrested for money laundering, and, to avoid a prison term, he turned over the records of all his bank's depositors, including Vicini. Within months, Vicini had pleaded guilty to tax evasion and was given a prison sentence, along with a bill for back taxes of three million dollars.

The tropics are full of Vicinis. In the past decade, there has been a boom in innovative ways to outwit the I.R.S.; sophisticated tax-evasion tactics aren't just for career criminals anymore. Fifteen years ago, no one except the odd international man of mystery had credit or debit cards from offshore banks. Today, two million Americans do. Promoters push "layered trusts," "offshore asset-protection trusts," and "constitutional pure trusts." If you spend a few minutes on the Internet trolling for tax scams, you'll come away convinced that everyone is cheating Uncle Sam but you.

The problem with such schemes, for your average taxpayer, is that they're illegal. If you want to avoid taxes with impunity, hide millions in offshore banks, and contentedly snub the tax authorities of your home country, you need to be something more than an ordinary citizen. You need to be a corporation. You need to be, say, Ingersoll-Rand.

Ingersoll-Rand, the venerable machinery manufacturer, has been an American company since its founding, a century ago. It made the jackhammers that made Mt. Rushmore. It has major contracts with the federal government. (It's currently trying to sell the feds new airport screening machines.) Yet, when it comes to paying taxes, Ingersoll-Rand is not an American company. It's Bermudan. Last December, Ingersoll reincorporated itself in Bermuda, where there are no corporate income taxes. The company has no operations on the island—just a small office, with no employees, that's little more than a mail drop. But this is enough to save the company forty million dollars a year.

Ingersoll-Rand is not alone. Among the many U.S. firms that, since 1994, have decided to reincorporate in Bermuda are the giant conglomerate Tyco, the electrical-parts manufacturer Cooper Industries, and the hardware maker Stanley Works. They're no different, really, from Mark Vicini: they're using paper transactions to shift income abroad in order to avoid taxes.

If Ingersoll actually wants to leave the United States and set up shop in Bermuda, so be it. Lovely golf courses, and all that. For that matter, if Toyota wanted to move to Michigan it would be more than welcome. But Ingersoll-Rand doesn't want to leave. Its executive offices are in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey. Its C.E.O. and all its top officers live here in the States. It wants the benefits of U.S. citizenship; it just doesn't want to pay for them.

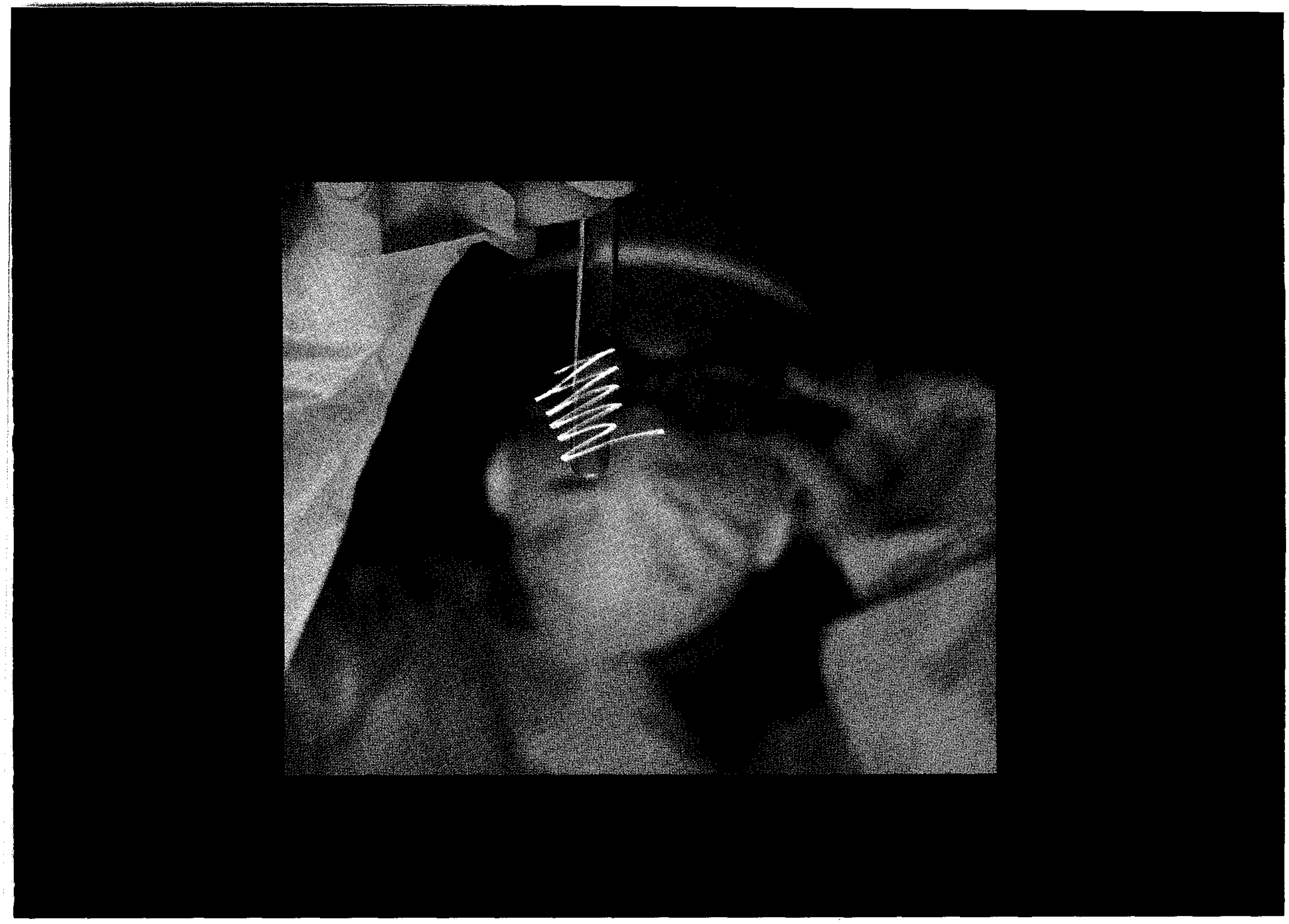
Someone who spends a hundred and eighty-three days a year in the United States is an American, as far as the tax man is concerned. So why should corporations, which, after all, are deemed "persons" in legal terms, enjoy the benefits of drop-box citizenship while human beings, who are also persons, sweat over their 1040s? It's not that complicated. If, say, the people who run a company live and work in northern New Jersey, let's agree that the company is American. Until Herbert Henkel, Ingersoll-Rand's C.E.O., moves his family, his desk, and his executive corps to Bermuda the firm's tax address there is just a joke.

And the joke's on us, because Ingersoll is simply doing what the law allows. So maybe there ought to be another law. Senator Charles Grassley, a solid Republican and an avid tax-cutter, introduced legislation last week that would discourage reincorporations like Ingersoll's, but the bill is sure to run into stiff opposition from House Republicans, who, cajoled by industry lobbyists, tend to equate the closing of any tax loophole with a tax hike. "We want to get at those cases where there's no legitimate business purpose behind the move, where companies have nothing more offshore than a piece of paper and a filing cabinet," Grassley says. Watch to see which way your congressman jumps.

The billions of dollars in tax revenue lost to corporate tax shelters is bad enough. But the real problem with the proliferation of shelters is that they sour the average American on one of the obligations of citizenship. "The more people think that the tax system is operating unfairly and arbitrarily, giving some special breaks, the more they'll look for a way not to pay taxes," Michael Graetz, a Yale law professor, says. The system depends on people's being what the political scientist Margaret Levi calls "contingent coöperators." Most Americans pay their taxes willingly—if grudgingly—even though in purely economic terms it's rational not to, given that the chances of getting audited are so slim. But people are willing to pay only as long as they think that everyone else is paying, too, and as long as they believe that tax dodgers will get their due. Big-name corporate tax scamps, like Ingersoll-Rand, are helping to corrode the very system that makes America work. They might as well take a jackhammer to Mt. Rushmore.

—James Surowiecki

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



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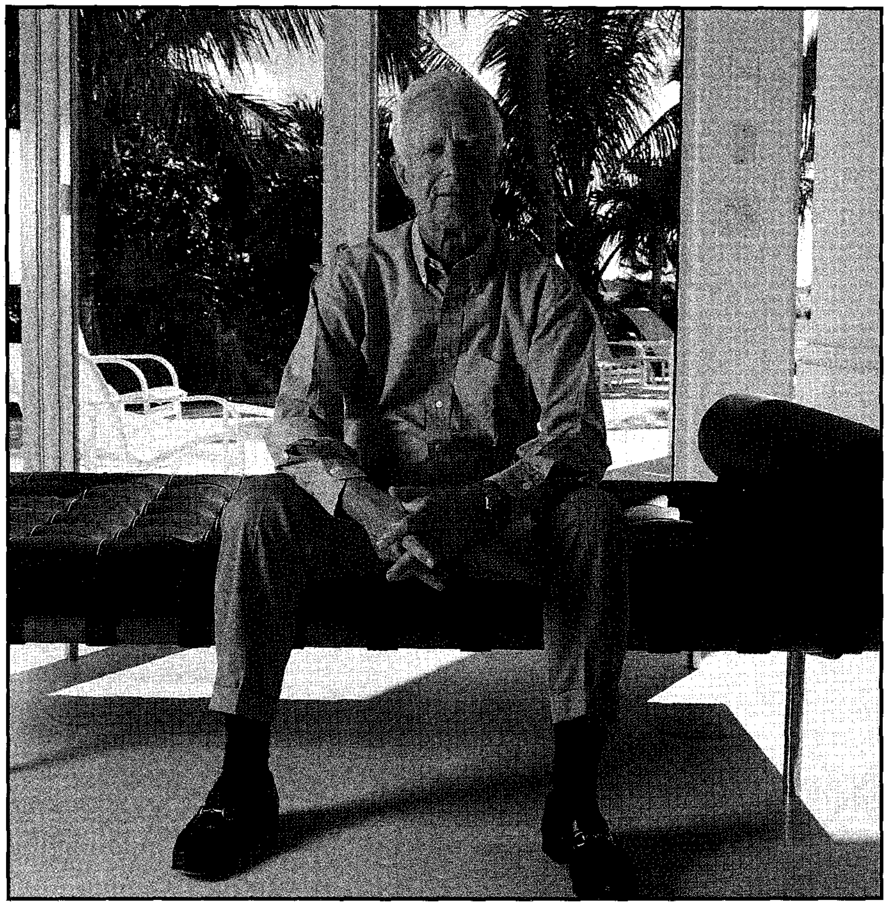
THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE ACCOUNTANTS' WAR

Arthur Levitt wanted to rein in the auditors. But he didn't reckon on Congress.

BY JANE MAYER



Levitt faced the Big Five's "fortress mentality." Photograph by Maggie Steber.

Nothing, it has been said, is duller than accounting—until someone is defrauded. And after every modern financial disaster—the stock-market crash of 1929, the bankruptcy of the Penn Central Railroad in 1970, the savings-and-loan crisis of the eighties, and now the bankruptcy of the Enron Corporation—investors have tended to ask the same question: where were the auditors?

Arthur Levitt, Jr., who was the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission under President Bill Clinton, believes that in the years leading up to Enron's collapse the auditors were busy organizing themselves into a lobbying force on Capitol Hill—one that has been singularly effective. Levitt, who issued a series of warnings about the accounting profession in those years, suggests that the aim of the so-called Big Five accounting firms—PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deloitte & Touche, Ernst & Young, K.P.M.G., and Arthur Andersen, Enron's auditor—was to weaken federal oversight, block proposed reform, and overpower the federal regulators who stood in their way. "They waged a war against us, a total war," Levitt said.

Some have portrayed Enron's crash and the woes of Arthur Andersen simply as huge business failures. "There are always going to be bad apples," said Jay Velasquez, a former aide to Senator Phil Gramm, who is now a Washington lobbyist for the accounting profession, and who has fought increased regulation. Barry Melancon, who heads the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the profession's trade group, which has three hundred and fifty thousand members, fears that those who are trying to impose political solutions will overreact. "We live in a free-market system," Melancon told me. "Businesses fail. People are not infallible."

But Levitt casts the Enron story in starker terms. It is, as he puts it, "*the* story of the nineties"—a battle between public and private interests that is being fought at a time when there is more corporate money in politics than ever before. "This is about corporate greed," Levitt told me. "It is the result of two decades of erosion of business ethics. It was the ultimate nexus of business and politics. If there was ever an example where money and lobbying damaged the public interest, this was clearly it."

Levitt, who is seventy-one and has silver hair, exhibits a starchy correctness. He still seems bitter about his war with the accounting trade, and called one adversary "an oily weasel" and another "a sly mongoose" as he spoke about the influence of money on politics. "It used to be that if industries had a problem they would try to work it out with the regulatory authorities," he said, in his sleek office at the Carlyle Group, in midtown Manhattan, surrounded by mementos of years in public life. "Now they bypass the regulators completely, and go right to Congress." Their campaign contributions lend them clout. "It's almost impossible to compete with the effect that money has on these congressmen." Enron's campaign contributions and its political power have received much attention, but two of the top five accounting firms—Arthur Andersen and Deloitte—and the accountants' trade association actually spent more during the 2000 elections. "The money was enormous," Levitt said. "Look at the end result."

Not many years ago, Levitt was considered a consummate Wall Street insider, even an operator. In 1993, when President Clinton picked him to run the Securities and Exchange Commission, he was a centrist, a well-connected fundraiser who had contributed to both parties. He had founded his own lobbying organization, the American Business Conference, to advocate the interests of

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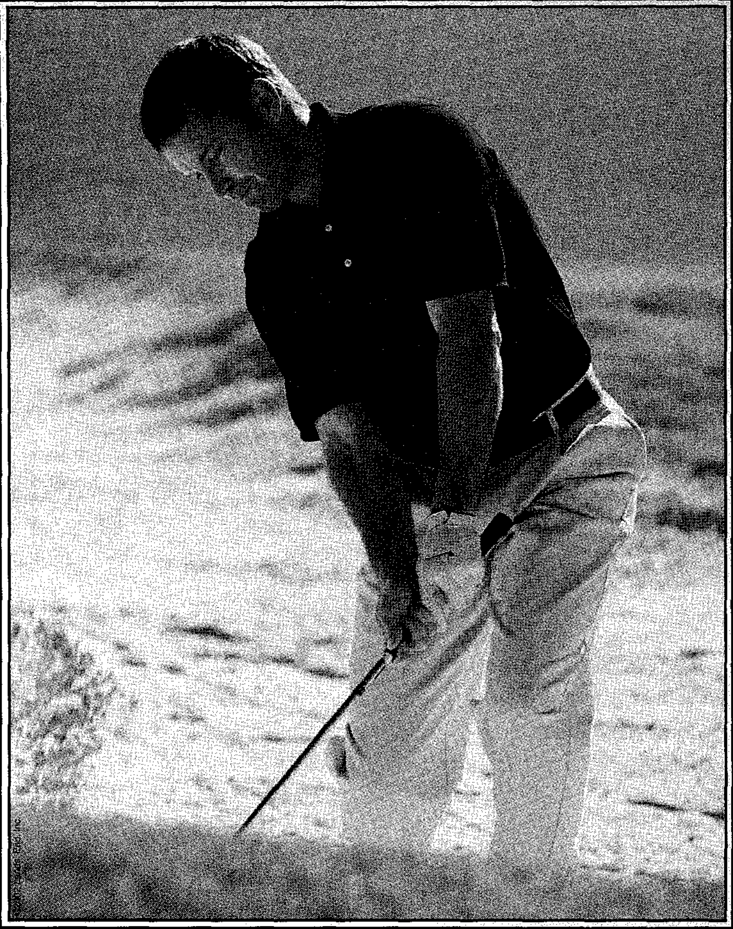

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small business on Capitol Hill. He was also someone with a knack for cultivating famous and powerful friends. In the nineteen-sixties, he joined a successful start-up New York firm as a stockbroker, and he eventually counted among his clients Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, and Kenneth Clark. Three of Levitt's original partners were Sanford Weill, who became the chairman of Citigroup; Arthur Carter, now the publisher of the New York *Observer;* and Roger Berlind, who became a Broadway producer. (Levitt had his own ties to Broadway; his aunt was Ethel Merman.) Levitt thrived, too, and by the late sixties he was running Shearson Hayden Stone, which later became Shearson Lehman Brothers.

In 1977, after being asked to head a search committee for the next leader of the American Stock Exchange, he got the job himself. A few years later, he was thinking of investing in *The National Journal,* a policy-oriented magazine in Washington, when he learned of the publication's interest in acquiring *Roll Call,* a struggling newspaper on Capitol Hill. Levitt declined to invest in *The National Journal* but bought *Roll Call* himself, for about five hundred thousand dollars. Seven years later, he sold it for fifteen million dollars.

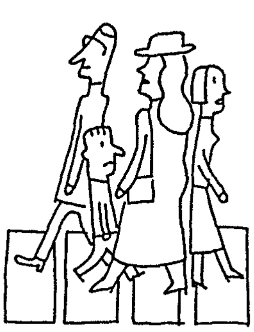
At the same time, Levitt was drawn to public life. He had grown up in a political household, the only son of Arthur Levitt, Sr., a Democrat who for twenty-four years was the New York State comptroller. Both his father and his mother, a public-school teacher in Brooklyn, were dependent on public pensions for their retirement, and they cared deeply about the protection of small investors.

When Levitt began his S.E.C. job, he acknowledged the populist tradition of the Roosevelt Administration, which created the S.E.C. in 1934, to insure the integrity of American financial markets. The agency's new Web site carried the motto of his most famous predecessor, William O. Douglas: "We are the investors' advocates." The S.E.C.'s basic requirement was that all publicly traded companies register with the agency and submit to annual independent audits. Douglas liked to say that the S.E.C. was "the shotgun behind the door." But Levitt soon discovered that the agency's arsenal was no match for the bull markets of the nineties. The new economy spawned new accounting schemes that raised concerns almost from the start.

One early fight was over stock options. Many pointed out that the accounting convention that kept these expenses, unlike ordinary executive compensation, off the books was deceptive. It meant that investors could not see a company's real liabilities. Levitt recalls that when he took office the first thing that Senators David Boren and Carl Levin, who were both active in regulatory reform, told him was that he "had to do something about stock options."

Congress soon got involved in the stock-option fight, and the politicization of accounting became more apparent than ever. Supporters of Wall Street and Silicon Valley, including many ordinarily pro-regulatory Democrats, fought against changing the stock-option rules; one, for example, was Senator Joseph Lieberman, of Connecticut, a state with a large concentration of Fortune 500 companies, many of which are campaign contributors. More surprising, the accounting profession, rather than remaining neutral, joined forces with its clients to fight the change. Together, they exerted pressure on the organization that sets the rules for the accounting business, the Financial Accounting Standards Board, or F.A.S.B. "This was a defining moment for me," Levitt said. A lawyer who was with the S.E.C. at the time says, "The accountants were going beyond good accounting. They were advocating a business position. They wanted to keep their customers happy. It was quite unseemly."

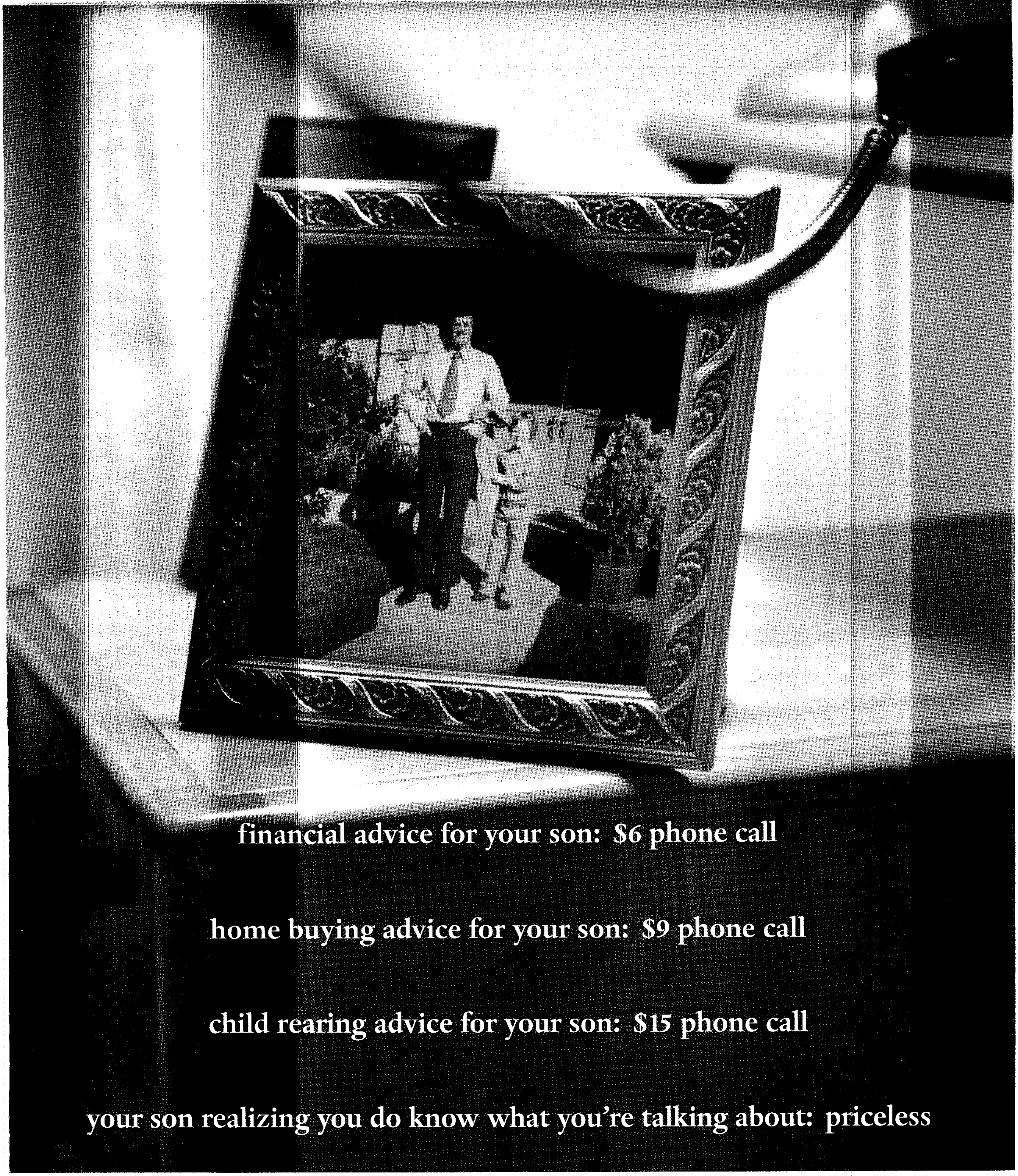
At first, Levitt played a hesitant role. In what he now regards as his "biggest mistake" at the commission, he, too, urged the F.A.S.B. to back off. His rationale, he said, was a fear that, if the board tried to resist the anti-regulatory feeling then sweeping Congress, it would be crushed altogether. (Sarah Teslik, the executive director of the Council of Institutional Investors, an advocate for shareholders, is among those who argue that Levitt "wasn't the hero he makes himself out to be.") Levitt told me that the episode showed him that the accounting trade was undergoing a cultural transformation. Instead of overseeing corporate America, it was joining forces with it. "The kind of greed that produced Enron and Arthur Andersen was symbolized by the way the companies dealt with stock options," he said. "I realized something was wrong."



Until the Second World War, the American accounting industry had stayed close to its eighteenth-century roots in bookkeeping. But with the rise of information technology the accounting firms branched into consulting. During the nineteen-nineties, the Big Five doubled their collective revenues, to $26.1 billion. Their consulting practices, in particular, were hugely profitable, and brought in three times as much revenue as auditing did, according to a study soon to be published in *The Accounting Review.* Auditors started coming under pressure to attract non-audit business. At some firms, like Andersen, auditors' compensation depended upon their ability to sell other services to clients; equity partners began to be paid like investment bankers. Inevitably, there were conflicts between the independent role required of an auditor and the supplicant role of a salesman trying to expand services.

At Enron, for example, Andersen did consulting on taxes and on internal auditing. Both projects threatened to put the outside auditors in the awkward position of assessing their own company's work. The relationship was further compromised by the fact that Enron's management included many former Andersen employees, among them the company's president, vice-president, and chief accounting officer. Auditors were thus in the position of judging former colleagues—and prospective bosses.

More than a year ago, well before Enron's problems became public, an internal e-mail revealed that fourteen top



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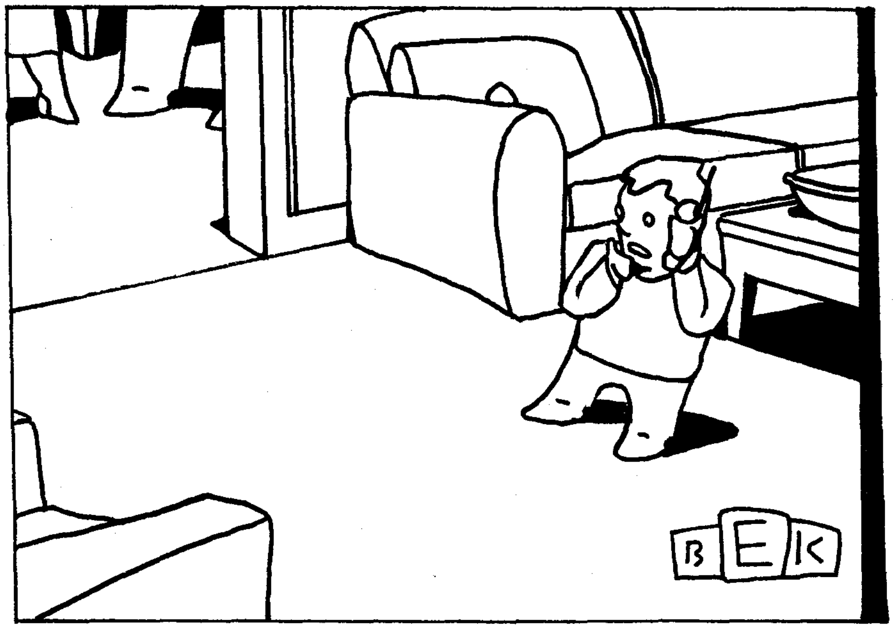

"I've got this center-of-the-universe gig."

• •

Andersen partners had pointed out several of the financial schemes that eventually contributed to Enron's fall. In a discussion about retaining Enron as a client the partners considered whether Enron's "aggressive . . . transaction structuring" was too risky. It appears from the e-mail, however, that the partners' concerns were outweighed by possible future rewards. The e-mail noted that their fees "could reach $100 million per year."

"If you get too friendly and too relaxed, you can wind up nodding your head yes when you should be saying no," said Charles Bowsher, a former head of the General Accounting Office, who worked at Andersen for many years and has been retained to help reform the firm. "There's a lot of art in addition to science in accounting." Bowsher says that "most fraud flourishes in gray areas." But James Cox, a professor of corporate and securities law at Duke University, suggests that Enron's accounting gimmickry was black-and-white. "It was not even close," he said. "It was dead wrong."

Levitt said that, as the country's senior guardian of fair markets, he watched the transformation of the accounting profession with alarm. "The brakes on the worst instincts of the business community weren't working," he says. "The gatekeepers were letting down the gates." The number of audit failures afflicting corporate America was increasing; Lynn Turner, who served under Levitt as the chief accountant at the S.E.C., estimates that investors lost a hundred billion dollars owing to faulty, misleading, or fraudulent audits in the six years preceding Enron's crash. Many of the best-known corporations in the country were affected, among them Cendant, W. R. Grace, Sunbeam, Xerox, Lucent, and Oxford Health Plans. In fact, the number of publicly traded companies forced to re-state their earnings went from three in 1981 to a hundred and fifty-eight last year, according to a doctoral thesis at New York University's Stern School of Business. (Barry Melancon, of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, calls concern over these numbers misleading, noting that they represent "fewer than one per cent of the audits performed.")

Shareholder lawsuits against the accounting firms proliferated. In response, the Big Five and their trade association united as a political force. According to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics, between 1989 and 2001 accounting firms spent nearly thirty-nine million dollars on political contributions. The contributions were bipartisan, reaching more than half the current members of the House and ninety-four of a hundred senators.

By 1995, this investment had started to pay off. Congress passed the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act, making it harder for shareholders to sue businesses and their auditors when the businesses failed. The legislation was championed by the Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, as part of his Contract with America. "What we were after was trying to get rid of the frivolous, merit-less cases," Mark Gitenstein, a lawyer and lobbyist who helped shape the legislation, said. "We convinced Congress that you needed a system that did a better job of screening the marginal cases from the serious ones." The resulting legislation, Professor Cox said, reversed "eighty years of federal procedure."

At first, Levitt tried to fight the private-securities bill, but when it became clear that the federal regulators couldn't compete with the accountants' clout in Congress, he looked for a compromise. "It was a case where the industry had more power than the regulators," he said. Then, as now, there were approximately seventy-five lobbyists for every member of the House and Senate; in the Gingrich era, they were more integrated into the lawmaking process than ever before. Jeffrey Peck, a former Democratic Senate aide who was then the head of Arthur Andersen's Washington lobbying office and is now an outside lobbyist for the firm, says that after this fight there was "really bad feeling" between Levitt and the profession. "It was as if two people had gone out on a first date and had a bad time," he says. "But the rules required them to keep dating."

Levitt told me that he has always been proud of his ability to create consensus, and in the spring of 1996 he tried to involve the profession in reforming itself. He urged the big accounting firms to strengthen their oversight system and toughen discipline for transgressors. He proposed giving investors and other members of the public a bigger role. But, he said, the accountants resisted, and progress was made only after "huge fights."

Rules governing auditors' independence hadn't been updated in two decades. To examine the growing number of questions about conflicts of interest, Levitt created a new board, whose membership was divided between independent business leaders and people from the accounting industry. "They were constantly deadlocked by differences of opinion," Levitt said, and added, "When I asked for support, I never got it. I never heard in any speech they"—the accountants—"gave the words 'public interest.' They were so stilted, and terse, and nonproductive—I realized it was an industry that completely lacked leadership."

The accounting industry hired Harvey Pitt, who was known as one of the smartest and most aggressive private-securities lawyers in the country. Pitt responded to Levitt's call for greater public oversight by arguing, in a lengthy white paper, that the accounting firms were better off policing themselves. "The staff regarded his white paper as a kick in the stomach, because it was so one-sided and confrontational," Levitt said. One S.E.C. official recalls that Pitt made the negotiations over the new board "the most horrible ever," and Lynn Turner says, "It was doomed from day one."

Pitt, who was appointed by President George W. Bush to succeed Levitt as chairman of the S.E.C., said, "There was a lot of misperception about what the white paper said. For some reason, early on people seemed to get in their mind that I opposed what Levitt did," to reform accounting. "I tried to give him my own help on a personal basis."

In the summer of 1998, Levitt received a report about a problem in Pricewaterhouse's Tampa office. According to the report, nine executives there had made eighty investments in companies that they were supposed to be auditing—a violation of the most basic independence standards. Under the S.E.C.'s direction, the firm initiated a company-wide investigation. To the shame of the entire profession, it turned up more than eight thousand such violations. The S.E.C. fined Pricewaterhouse two and a half million dollars, and called for an investigation into compliance with independence rules at the rest of the Big Five firms; Levitt asked an independent group, the Public Oversight Board, which had been created after the Penn Central collapse, to undertake this task.

Levitt also took his battle public; in the fall of 1998, he gave a speech that attacked the "numbers game." He said, "Accounting is being perverted. Auditors who want to retain their clients are under pressure not to stand in the way." He explained, "Auditors and analysts are participants in a game of nods and winks. . . . I fear we are witnessing an erosion in the quality of earnings, and therefore the quality of financial reporting." In conclusion, he said, "Today American markets enjoy the confidence of the world. How many half-truths and accounting sleights of hand will it take to tarnish that faith?"

The Public Oversight Board, made up of major business figures, was supposed to act as the profession's conscience. But in May, 2000, before its investigation could be completed, the P.O.B.'s head, Charles Bowsher, received a letter from officials at the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, which finances the board, announcing that it would "not approve nor authorize" funding for further investigations. Bowsher, who had himself been a high-ranking officer with Arthur Andersen before becoming the head of the General Accounting Office, says that he was shocked; the industry was effectively stopping the investigation. Melvin Laird, a former Secretary of Defense, who was the longest-serving member of the P.O.B., called it "the worst incident in my seventeen years." Barry Melancon, the head of the trade association, defended the association's position. "We were never opposed to the concept," he told me, referring to the investigation. "We just felt the P.O.B. was undertaking a project that it couldn't define."

At the same time, the S.E.C. was uncovering a huge case of accounting fraud involving the garbage-disposal company Waste Management: Arthur Andersen had put an unqualified seal of approval on numbers that the government said it either knew or should have known were misleading. As if in anticipation of the revolving-door conflicts at Enron, practically every C.F.O. and C.A.O. in Waste Management's history had come from Andersen. S.E.C. enforcement documents from the investigation reveal something else: at least two of the partners who were singled out for scrutiny by the S.E.C. remained in influential positions at Andersen while being investigated, and both have now surfaced in connection with the Enron affair. (One executive, Robert Kutsenda, who was later barred by the S.E.C. from auditing public companies for a year, was placed in charge of redesigning the firm's policy on which documents to retain and which to shred, an issue in the Enron case. Kutsenda and Steve Samek, who was also investigated in the Waste Management case but not publicly sanctioned, were among those involved in the discussion of whether to retain Enron as a client. None of the executives involved in the Waste Management matter were fired by Andersen, which last year agreed to pay a seven-million-dollar penalty to the S.E.C., without admitting or denying guilt, after it was charged with fraud. In addition, two of the Andersen partners targeted by the S.E.C. in the fraud case now serve on the profession's standard-setting board, the F.A.S.B.)

By 2000, Levitt, faced with what he calls the Big Five's "fortress mentality," had initiated a series of meetings with the firms at which he insisted that they needed to do more to police themselves. Levitt's message, Turner told me, was that the firms could either coöperate with an investigation into their compliance with independence rules or "we'll issue the subpoenas tomorrow—take your pick."

In the spring of 2000, the S.E.C. announced that it planned to draft new rules that would greatly restrict accountants' ability to consult for the same companies they audited. Arthur Andersen reportedly argued that this would cut its market potential by forty per cent, and vowed to fight back. A June meeting in Deloitte's New York headquarters with the heads of the three firms who most vehemently opposed the new rules "was so icy you could have stored cold meat in that room," Turner says. The heads of Andersen, Deloitte, and K.P.M.G. joined Melancon on one side of a conference table. (Pricewaterhouse and Ernst & Young were more supportive of Levitt, and didn't attend.) Levitt and two S.E.C. officials were on the other. When Levitt made it clear that he intended to move forward, Andersen's chief executive,

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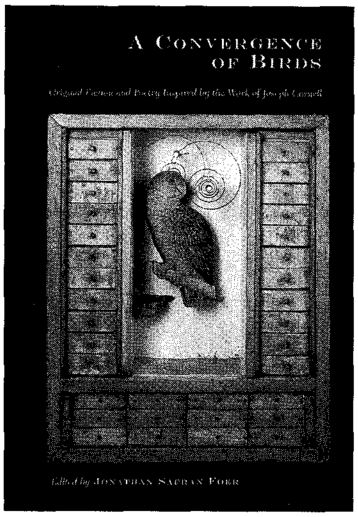

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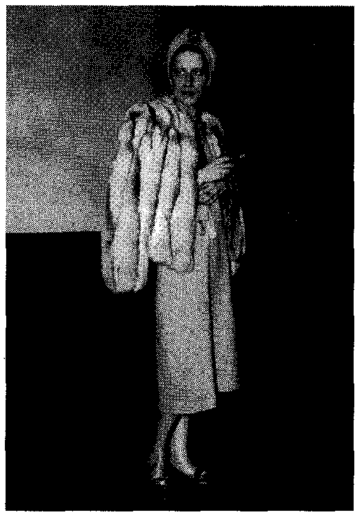

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Robert Grafton, declared, "This is war."

"It was unbelievable, just unbelievable," Turner recalled. "They all went after Arthur. They made clear that everything was fair game." Turner says that the attitude of the firms was "You know we're going to win anyway in the end, so why not save us the expense, and give up now?"

"As soon as I left that meeting," Levitt told me, "it was clear the fight was going to Capitol Hill." Such clashes over commercial interests are commonplace in Congress, but "this wasn't about legislation," he said. "It was about S.E.C. rule-making—we're supposed to be an independent agency. I'd never seen anything like it at the S.E.C."

During this period, Levitt said, he got a letter from Representative W. J. (Billy) Tauzin, of Louisiana, the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, who has received more than two hundred and eighty thousand dollars from the accounting industry over the past decade. The letter consisted of four pages of pointed questions. In a not very veiled threat, Tauzin asked how many violations Levitt and the other members of the S.E.C. would have if *their* stock holdings were subjected to the independence rules being proposed for the accountants. He also demanded that Levitt produce proof that non-audit consulting undermines auditors' accuracy. "It was a shot across the bow from the industry," Levitt says. "They were saying, 'If you go forward, expect a lot of pain.' "

In the following weeks, he said, Tauzin "badgered me relentlessly. He knew what the accountants were doing before I did. He was working very closely with them. I don't mean to sound cynical, but is it because he loves accountants?" At one point, relations between the two men grew so bad that Levitt hung up on Tauzin, because he felt that "his words and his tone were threatening."

Tauzin was not alone. In the four weeks after Levitt announced his intention to go through with the proposed new rules, forty-six more congressmen wrote to him questioning them. Data from the Center for Responsive Politics show that in 2000 the accountants contributed more than ten million dollars to political campaigns and spent $12.6 million on federal lobbying. Arthur Andersen alone nearly doubled its lobbying budget in the second half of the year, to $1.6 million. Among the lobbyists hired by the industry were Vic Fazio, a former congressman; Jack Quinn, a former Clinton White House counsel; Ed Gillespie, a former Bush campaign adviser; Patrick Griffin, Clinton's former congressional liaison; Dan Brouillette, a former aide to Tauzin who is now an Assistant Energy Secretary; and a number of other former Hill staff people.

Now, however, Tauzin has joined in the public outrage toward Enron and Andersen; in a House hearing that he chaired, he called the case "an old-fashioned example of theft by insiders, and a failure of those responsible for them to prevent that theft." He told me that money hadn't influenced his earlier defense of the accountants. "Donations have never bought anybody any slack with this committee," he said. "I'm not saying that contributions don't have the power to corrupt. They do. But I always assume people contribute to me because they like the work I do."

By early fall of 2000, Levitt says, he began to hear another kind of threat: lobbyists told him that if he didn't back off there would be a push to cut the S.E.C.'s funding. "They were going to place a rider on our appropriations budget," Levitt said, still sounding as if he could not believe it. Jay Velasquez, a lobbyist for the accountants at the time, confirmed this. "You have to consider all your options," he said. "There is no doubt that the rider was a consideration. In these battles, everything is on the table." Henry Bonilla, a Texas Republican with an anti-regulatory temperament who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, was prepared to attach the rider. Bowsher, the former G.A.O. head, says that such threats were once unthinkable. "In the old days, the S.E.C. was off limits to that kind of pressure. It was a place the private sector respected. Nobody, nobody, would have thought about asking Congress to cut the budget."

Representative Tom Udall, a Democrat from New Mexico, says that his staff urged him to sign a widely circulated letter to Levitt opposing the proposed

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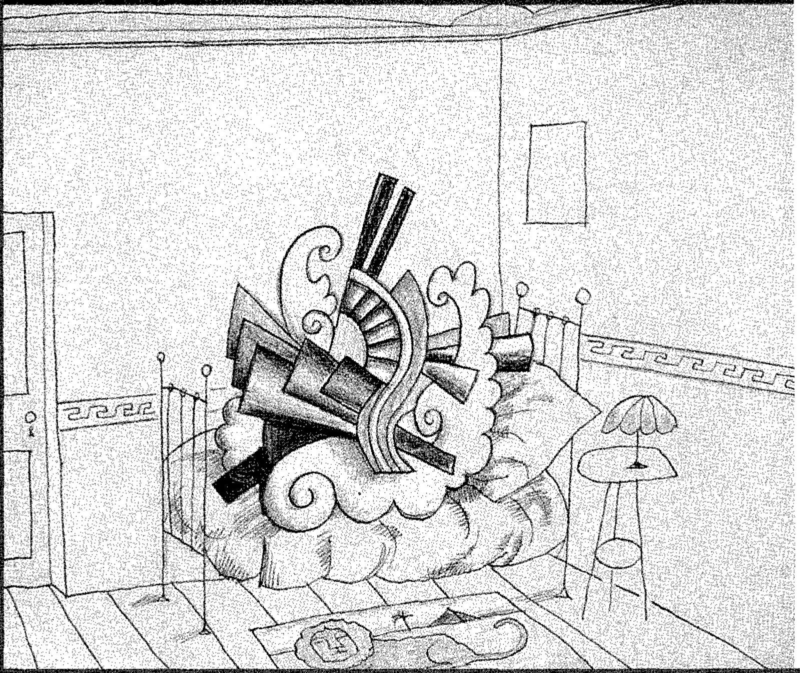

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rules, because so many of his colleagues had. "There's sort of a herd mentality," he said. He refused; he knew Levitt slightly, through mutual friends in Santa Fe. "Levitt was out to solve these things before people realized there was a problem. That's the sign of a leader. But the special interests have such a hold on members of Congress that they were able to stop a lot of things."

Levitt initiated a nationwide series of public hearings about accounting abuses, fighting back as if he were involved in a political campaign. Damon Silvers, an A.F.L.-C.I.O. official who supported the S.E.C.'s position, recalls that "Levitt looked like a figure from some old movie—he was sitting at a huge desk at the S.E.C. with a bank of phones, talking on several lines at once."

But by then Levitt's eight-year term at the S.E.C. was about to expire, and the accounting-industry supporters developed a new strategy: they started to oppose the rule's substance on procedural grounds, arguing that there hadn't been enough time for public hearings. "Of course, we knew that by calling for more time it would mean the end of Levitt," one lobbyist said.

With the accounting firms threatening to take the S.E.C. to court if he went ahead with the rules, Levitt tried to strike a deal with the three firms who opposed him, at which point the two firms who had previously supported him turned against him. That night, one aide recalled, Levitt gave up. "I lost it," Levitt said.

In the end, he kept negotiating, and the S.E.C. agreed to let the firms continue to consult for the companies they audited. But the firms agreed to disclose the details to investors. "I knew it wasn't enough, but I thought we'd be overruled by Congress in one fashion or another," Levitt said. "The part of me that was insecure wanted a bird in the hand."

Almost exactly a year later, Enron's outside auditor, Arthur Andersen L.L.P., a company whose image had virtually defined Midwestern probity, made an astonishing admission. During the previous three years, when it had vouched for Enron's financial statements, the company's net income had actually been inflated by almost six hundred million dollars. In a financial market where stocks plummet if corporate earnings fall a penny short of projections, Enron was forced to reveal that its profits had been off by about twenty per cent over three years. As early as 1997, Andersen had known that Enron was inflating its income. But when Enron declined to correct the numbers Andersen certified them anyway. Within six months, Enron had filed for bankruptcy and Andersen had been indicted on charges of obstruction of justice for destroying documents related to its Enron work. Investors lost an estimated ninety-three billion dollars, a sum nearly equal to the amount of the economic-stimulus package that President Bush requested for the entire country. In the year before Enron's crash, Andersen had collected a million dollars a week from Enron for its expertise. More than half of that, Andersen acknowledged, in compliance with the new S.E.C. rule, was for non-auditing work.

"If these reforms had been in place earlier, we wouldn't have had an Enron," Lynn Turner told me. He laughed, but the laugh sounded a little forced as he spoke about Congress's newfound interest in reform. "Maybe the congressmen *were* listening more than I thought—we just weren't giving them enough money," he said.

Not long ago, Levitt was called to testify before Congress about what went wrong at Arthur Andersen. "It was a play within a play," he told me. He said that he has little hope for meaningful change in the profession, despite all the bills under consideration, and despite commitments from Harvey Pitt, his successor at the S.E.C. Before Enron collapsed, Pitt promised the accountants "kinder and gentler" treatment than Levitt had shown them, but he has since sharpened his rhetoric and proposed a great many reforms. Pitt told me that his work for the accountants has made him better able to persuade them to change their ways because, "to put it bluntly, I know where the bodies are buried." But Pitt dismissed Levitt's approach—separating auditing from consulting—as "a simplistic solution to a complex problem," and told me that he thought it could prove counterproductive. "A firm that does only audits may be incompetent," he said.

"That's the same argument that the accountants put forward," Levitt said with a sigh. "I didn't accept it then, and I accept it even less today. I have to conclude it's specious. It's very sad. The Administration is missing a glorious opportunity to reform this industry." ♦

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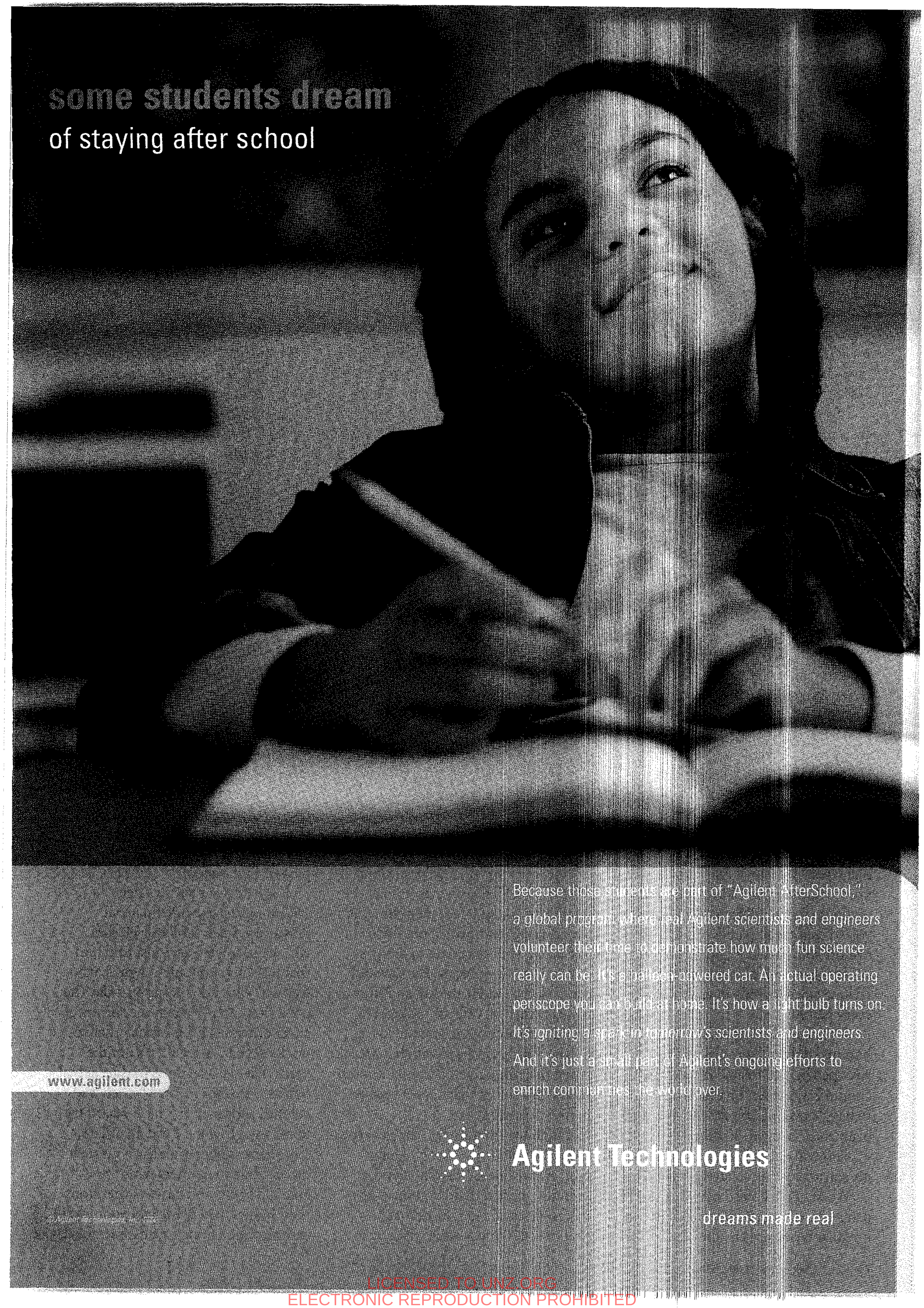

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COLLEGE TRY

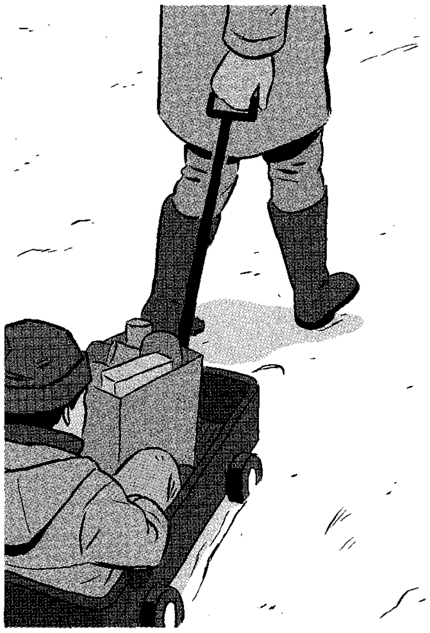
The rough patch I skidded into when my son was in first grade and I embarked on single-momhood would not earn me a slot on the poverty tables, yet at no other time in my life have financial anxieties transformed my head into such an anthill of fret.

By every yardstick, I was O.K. My career as a poet—if such a thing can be said to exist—had won me a few prizes and thus the relatively illustrious post of assistant professor at Syracuse University. I owned a modest home, had health insurance, an agreeable divorce. But every month, after I wrote checks for the mortgage, utilities, and my portion of child-care costs, only a few hundred dollars remained for everything else. Clothes, food, transportation, medical whatnot—all got chipped from that chunk. My debt was inching up like floodwater, and when I sat down to pay bills I felt the panicked breathlessness that must accompany drowning.

Because my mind secretly believes it can figure its way out of anything, I used razor-sharp margins on the budgets laid out in a spiral notebook I carried everywhere. But, no matter how many pots of beans I calculated cooking up, the numbers wouldn't tally. Some nights, a phone call from some barky-voiced creditor so panicked me that I'd tear off sofa cushions and rifle old coat pockets in search of spare coins, though I'd long since rooted out and rolled every penny.

A garage sale yielded less than a hundred dollars. Sale aficionados swooped in, and treated me like the chump I was when I hadn't the heart to haggle over nickels for my worn baby blankets or banged-up drip coffeepot. I was left with a house so cavernous that my son asked if he could skateboard in it.

Worst of all, I didn't have a car, and in parenting terms, in a midsized city with irregular buses and an annual snowfall measurable in yards, that turns out to be a burden. The bus trips to and from my son's after-school program were two hours. To go to the grocery store, I hauled him in a red wagon—often crimson-faced from cold—over slushy sidewalks and roads. I'd wave cheerfully to my neighbors and mutter something idiotic about fresh air while I burned with shame.



Some warped pride kept me lopped off from help. I'd grown up among the working class, and poor-mouthing, as we called it, was frowned on. At the university, I never said no to dinners out with visiting writers. But I would claim to have eaten already, and stuff my pockets with rolls, or packets of crackers for my son and me to eat mushed up in tumblers with buttermilk. More than once, I left a women's-room stall with a roll of toilet paper stashed in my book bag.

Of course, in terms of real poverty, these complaints are paltry. That year, on my first Christmas alone, a friend suggested that I volunteer at the homeless shelter, work that reproportioned my putative disaster pretty fast. Nor was this what you'd call my first rodeo on the economic edge. Years earlier, after a disastrous high-school career, I'd set out from Texas with a truckload of surfers aimed at the Pacific. We angled to get factory jobs and live close enough to the beach to catch morning swells. I had about fifty dollars and a box of Russian novels.

We swapped around our few free sleeping places. With several people wedged inside, a plywood camper built on the back of an old blue pickup quickly filled with oxides you'd just as soon not have concentrated in a small place. We also had a pink Lincoln Continental, the broken-down legacy of a home-town dope dealer, allegedly jailed in Mexico. We stole oranges and avocados from local orchards. A surfer pal told us that one supermarket threw out produce on Tuesday and Saturday mornings, and we waited at the giant Dumpster to gather up the slightly wilted lettuces and bruised apples. But even Dumpster-diving couldn't dampen the sheer feral joy of freedom I felt after the heavy plod of high school.

Flash-forward to my later, arithmetically less dire financial downturn. Inject a blue-eyed son whose classmates have just told him that his aqua snowsuit is a girl's, who wants a Nintendo for his birthday (he got a free kitten)—then the shivers of adventure quickly become nettlelike prickles. Fear. After all, it's not the math that eats you up, is it? The actual number of zeros involved when the column ends in red? That's what I try to tell myself when I watch, of late, Enron execs poor-mouth about their losses while the camera pans the emerald lawns and beaches that front their homes, where the real poor must easily imagine firing squads assembled. ♦

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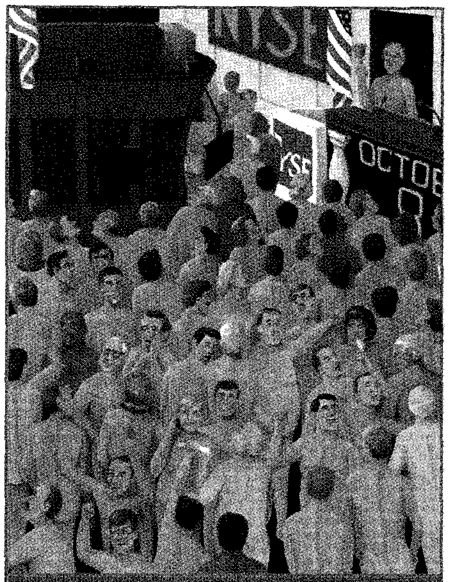

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

SAVING PARADISE

The preservationist, the pastor, and a night club in Harlem.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Michael Henry Adams is a preservationist with an unusual attachment to the history and houses of Harlem, an African-American neighborhood of vast reach, complicated history, and uncertain hopes at the northern end of Manhattan. Adams is an unusual figure in Harlem. He would be an unusual figure anywhere, except perhaps Edwardian London, or Harlem as it was seventy-five years ago. His daily costume in winter includes a bowler hat, a wasp-waisted camel-hair overcoat, a half-cut mustache of the kind one sees in portraits of early-twentieth-century art dealers, and a silver-handled cane. In summer, he exchanges the bowler for a straw boater. Like all passionate, self-shaped New Yorkers, he comes from Akron. He arrived in 1985 in the Harlem he had dreamed about as a boy, and, in the years since, he has been a chef for the family of the unlucky real-estate magnate Larry A. Silverstein, an occasional journalist, a graduate student, and now makes a frugal living by writing and giving guided tours. He lives on West 122nd Street, in a ground-floor apartment filled with pieces of woodwork and ironwork and furniture salvaged from demolition sites around the neighborhood. For years, he has labored there on his masterpiece, "Harlem Lost and Found," a history, which is to be published by Monacelli this fall.

He is a gentleman and a scholar, but he is also an activist of unusual audacity. He likes to picket, even if he is the only man on the picket line, and although his speaking voice is gentle and Anglophile, he has, for picketing occasions, a startling basso profundo that can penetrate across streets and into church basements and through the heads of dense and uncaring developers of every hue. In the pursuit of equal justice for Harlem's landmarks, he often forms one-man parades on behalf of old buildings threatened by commercial greed or government indifference.

"Only ten per cent of the eleven thousand designated landmarks in Manhattan are north of Ninety-sixth Street, and that doesn't seem like a just number," he says. His dream is to turn all of Harlem into a National Historic Landmark District, and for this cause he has, among other things, chained himself to the door of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. His knowledge of Harlem is encyclopedic, block by block and brownstone by brownstone, and he speaks excitedly of aubergine Art Nouveau grilles and Palladian exteriors as he walks along blocks where the conventional reports are of crack dens and flying bullets. "And this," he will announce on, say, 129th Street near Lenox, a beautiful streetscape filled with turn-of-the-century town houses, "is what the *Times* has called the most dangerous block in New York City."

Adams not only sees the glass as half full where others see it as half empty; he sees a glass where others see merely a puddle of stagnant water, spilled long ago. It would be fair to say that he exists, at times, in a Harlem of his own imagining only if one adds that nearly all Harlems are of their makers' imaginings, for Harlem is distinctive among New York neighborhoods in being a set of thwarted possibilities rather than a series of successful accommodations. "Somewhere I recall reading Lincoln Kirstein saying to someone that in the twenties Harlem was treated as just another arrondissement of Paris," Adams says. "That's my Harlem, and I believe it can return."

In the past few years, his vision has emerged from his studio to do battle with other people's visions of what Harlem can and should be—a redoubt of racial resistance, or a poor people's refuge, or the real-estate brokers' Upper Upper West Side. Adams knows that his battle is quixotic, but he also likes tilting at windmills. He has even, in the past few months, led a charge against the plans of Calvin O. Butts III, the pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, who is generally considered to be the most powerful man in Harlem, and who, if he thought of himself as a windmill at all, would probably think of himself as the kind of windmill that takes recalcitrant grain and grinds it very, very small.

On a cold, sunny February morning, Michael Henry Adams paid a call on his friend Mrs. Josephine E. Jones, at her terra-cotta-brick-and-brownstone Queen Anne-style town house on West 122nd Street. Mrs. Jones gives meaning to the cliché "pillar of the community"—one can imagine entire buildings falling down without her support—and pretty much embodies the past fifty years of Harlem history, from the great migration and the encroaching shadows to the new hope.

"I always promised myself that someday I would own a house," she said, sitting formally in the back parlor of the house that she reclaimed from an S.R.O. in the nineteen-seventies. The sun was streaming in from the street. "You see, I grew up in Gray Court, South Carolina, and we played around a house that was owned by the Shell family. This was a white family, you see, with a beautiful Victorian house, and we were crowded in our little place down there, and I promised myself that *someday* I would live in my own mansion, you see, own my own house. On June 24, 1946, I left the South and saw New York for the first time. I worked domestically, and then I became the manager at the cafeteria of the Standard Brands company. When my daughter Wendy was six months old, I realized that I did not want to live with her father, and so I ended *that*." Working at two jobs, she sent Wendy first through Dalton ("They wanted to give me a full scholarship, but I said, 'I don't want a full scholarship, I will not *have* a full scholarship. I'll take a half.' Because my father said, 'Do what you can for yourself before you let someone else supply the rest' ") and then through Yale.

Mrs. Jones still mourns the Harlem she knew. "You should have seen my Harlem then, in the forties. It was a *glossy* neighborhood. It was *glossy*. A man might have been an elevator operator or a workman, but if he was going to work on the trains he was going in a suit and a tie and with his shoes shined bright. Shined up. Then came the drugs, and then came the riots, and then came the blackout, and—and it all changed. But I have held on to my house, and I have a house as fine as the Shells' house. So, you see, I have kept a promise made to myself."

Michael Henry Adams and Josephine E. Jones at her house. Photograph by Jason Schmidt.

Adams views Mrs. Jones as an example of what his adversaries don't want to see, and that is that there is already in place a population that cares just as passionately as he does about Harlem's past, and that sees in its recovery a key to its future. "Preservation is not some downtown rich person's concern," he says. "It's a community concern. When people say to me that the choice is between preservation and growth, I say to them, Well, if that's true then what about SoHo, what about Tribeca? What about Charleston and Savannah? Why is it that preserving those neighborhoods was inextricably linked to their growth and wealth, and why is that not the case with Harlem?"

Adams's vision of Harlem had run headlong into the vision of the Reverend Butts in a fight over two buildings owned by the Abyssinian Development Corporation, the real-estate arm of the church. Harlem has always belonged in spirit to its churches, and, after the long period between the mid-seventies and the early nineties, when property was being abandoned across Harlem, the Abyssinian Development Corporation had become a major landowner. Now it had decided to redevelop two of the long-abandoned properties it owns, both of them historic and both of them dear to Adams's heart: the Renaissance Ballroom and Casino, a kind of banquet hall, on Seventh Avenue between 137th and 138th Streets; and, what Adams found more painful, the building that once housed Small's Paradise, a legendary night club, at Seventh Avenue and 135th Street. A plan had already been drawn up to convert it into a new home for the Thurgood Marshall Academy, a select public middle and high school, with a restaurant to be lodged on the ground floor.

"Do you know what the restaurant is going to be?" Adams asked, heading uptown in a livery cab. "They're boasting that they've got an International House of Pancakes." He says "pancakes" the way a minister might say "crack." "Pancakes, in place of Small's Paradise, which was the only African-American-owned night club among the big four of the Renaissance. As though Harlem needed a worse diet than it already has."

He got out of the car and stood at the corner of 135th Street, and pointed to the Paradise. It is an unprepossessing three-story building that has been boarded up. The remnants of a billboard are the only reminder that it was once a jazz palace, and its only obvious architectural distinction is the rows of ball-and-socket, vaguely Deco turrets that surmount it. Adams looked at the place. "Butts had the effrontery to say that what Harlem doesn't need is another bar. Another bar! If Small's Paradise was a bar, then . . . then Marian Anderson was just another singer. All the great figures of the Harlem Renaissance sang and danced here." He gestured with his cane. "Look around you—there are lots here, lots there, empty lots and parking lots everywhere you look! Why can't Reverend Butts use one of those for the high school? Why can't we build elsewhere and save the Paradise?" All around, on the cruel winter day, bits of trash blew at his feet, and the boarded-up building seemed to shiver in the cold.

Harlem really was the Upper Upper West Side once, a placid community of row houses and brownstones, punctuated by Romanesque churches and Moorish synagogues. This is the Harlem where, contrary to Lower East Side legend, Richard Rodgers and Milton Berle grew up. That Harlem began to change in 1904, when Philip Payton, an African-American entrepreneur from New England, saw that blacks, who were increasingly being displaced from their homes in the Tenderloin by race riots and the development of Pennsylvania Station, might be persuaded to build a small community in the north of the city. (A real-estate crash had left a lot of rental real estate uptown temporarily vacant.) Payton's insight was that blacks would pay a premium to live in a neighborhood that was graced by so many comfortable homes and had previously been so inhospitable to them. Within a generation, Harlem had been effectively occupied by a new black middle class and lower middle class, who adopted the mixture of residential and ceremonial buildings and added some of their own. The Depression brought an end to the most obviously glittering period of Harlem life, but Harlem remained an energetic lower-middle-class community through the forties and well into the fifties, in what might be called the Sugar Ray Robinson era, after the great middleweight whose flamingo-pink Cadillac was often parked on the street outside a night club he owned on Seventh Avenue.

Harlem's golden, and then flamingo-pink, age didn't last long. Most city historians date the real decline of Harlem to the early sixties, when it was hit by a toxic combination of events: the vast projects that garrisoned poor people in permanent enclosures, the displacement of middle-class people to the suburbs (which affected blacks as much as whites), and the drug epidemic. But it was the nineteen-seventies, and particularly the blackout of 1977, that made Harlem a symbol of urban despair. (Mrs. Jones: "It all changed when the blackout came. It seemed as if the people just went crazy. They had trucks ready to crash through store windows. . . . When the next day came, it was over, and my Harlem was never the same place again.")

Harlem became a symbol not just of much that had gone wrong in black urban life but of the ways that it had gone *completely* wrong. In the mid-seventies, *National Geographic* published an article showing "the danger, the menace, the ubiquitous horror" of the streets of Harlem. A local pastor was quoted as saying, sternly, "What is wrong with Harlem is also wrong with New York City and wrong with the whole country and, if you like, the world." In this way, two images of Harlem—a onetime paradise and an urban hell—fed on each other, while the real Harlem went on, depressed and occasionally violent but a real community with real people living in it. (Mrs. Jones bought her house in 1976.)

The speed of Harlem's decline kept much of its physical plant in a cryogenic state of preservation. The sign for Blumstein's department store on 125th Street remained a landmark long after Blumstein's closed. "I had been reading about Harlem all my life, and then when I arrived I was shocked to discover that it was all there, still, but frozen like something in a fable," Adams says. "After a few years scuffling around, I went off to study urban preservation at Columbia. I couldn't get anyone there to care about Harlem, although it was just the other side of the park!" There is wonder in his voice. "And there it was. There it was."

On a bleak February 6th, Michael Henry Adams went before Community Board 10 to plead for emergency landmark designation for Small's Paradise and the Renaissance Ballroom and Casino, along with the Loew's Victoria Theatre, on 125th Street, and the West 138th Street Y.M.C.A. Although Community Board certification was not in any way binding, it would be a powerful symbol of resistance to the redevelopment plan. Adams was pessimistic about the chances of winning a resolution. Relations between the Abyssinian Development Corporation and the Community Board are typically very close.

The meeting was held in the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, at the corner of 125th Street and Seventh Avenue, a nineteen-story structure in which, Adams says dourly, "Nelson Rockefeller attempted to do for Harlem what he had already done for Albany." The Community Board meeting was a lively, skeptical occasion, Harlem being abundantly endowed with skepticism about the motives of real-estate people. If you tell someone that there's more to something than meets the eye, even if what meets the eye is all there is, he will almost always agree with you.

To Adams's surprise, the emergency resolution passed easily. The only objections came not from those who were anxious to defend the A.D.C.—by far the most powerful organization in Har-

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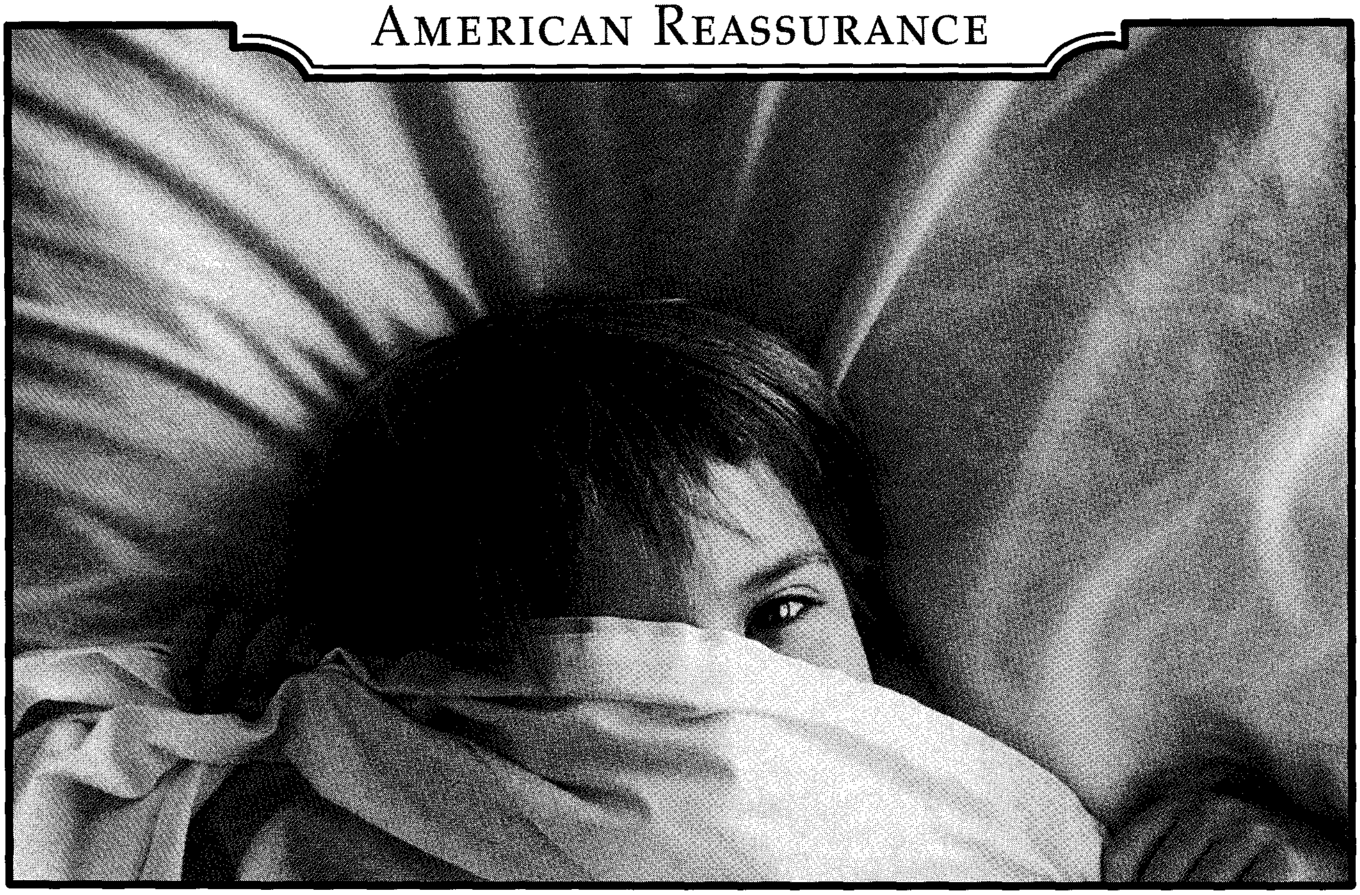

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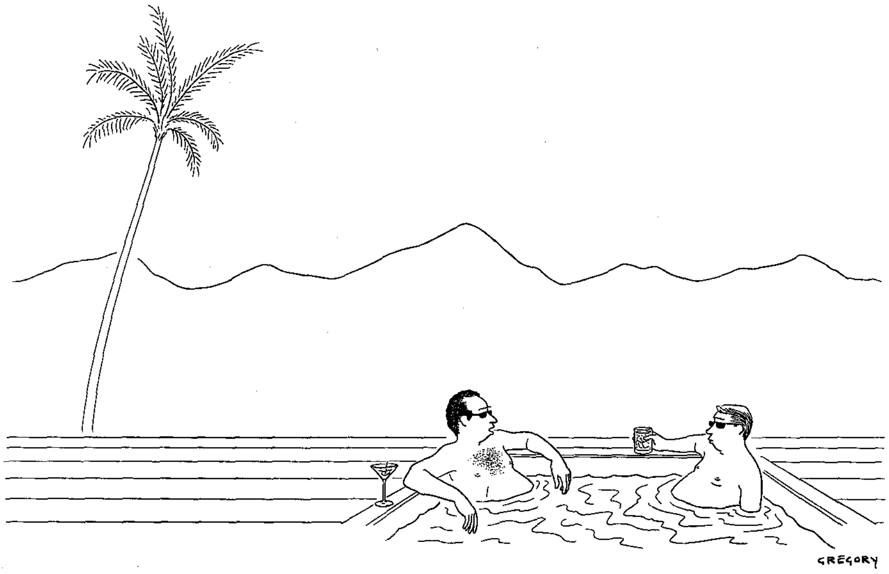

"The TV money is good, but, as a writer, I feel more creatively fulfilled by the movie money."

lem—but from an advocate who did not think that any part of the "European" heritage of Harlem ought to be preserved. "This is an African-American community, and we shouldn't worry so much about these mock-European buildings we have here," he said.

Adams was appalled. "These are part of our African-American heritage," he said. "They were the buildings we *wanted*."

The sentiment behind the resolution seemed to have less to do with a desire to defy the A.D.C. than with a desire to make a public statement that the Community Board was determined to keep Harlem black, through a reaffirmation of some of its symbols. "We just have got to protect this neighborhood, our community," someone said. And although in this case the residents were "protecting" it from some of its own leaders, still the sentiment was strong enough to overcome apparent self-interest.

"In a decade, there won't be any Harlem left, not for black people," someone else said, and there were nods of agreement. "We've got to protect our community or it will all be gone before we know it."

For many people who have never been there, the gentrification of Harlem is an accomplished fact. The papers are filled with happy pieces about rehabs and redos. A new view of Harlem as a multiracial restoration project has replaced the old view of Harlem as a violent, crime-ridden slum. Stories circulate about the number of white couples who have crossed over Morningside Park, of whole blocks bought up by real-estate developers, of Columbia's new and vast holdings east of Manhattan Avenue.

Some of this is true, or close to true. The million-dollar mark has been broken for a brownstone, and a one-bedroom apartment under a thousand dollars is hard to find. It is possible to meet yuppies who have taken to Harlem—a girl from the Jewish Theological Seminary who has an apartment on West 120th, say. A handful of (often gay) couples have pioneered brownstones in the West 140s, which includes Hamilton Heights, the one area of Harlem that does seem to have been notably gentrified, and now finds itself not always considered Harlem. (Central Harlem has, of course, long been bounded on its eastern and northwestern edges by Hispanic communities.)

Nonetheless, one can walk for hours along some of the most beautiful of New York City blocks—137th and 139th off Lenox, for instance, and then up and down St. Nicholas Avenue in the 140s—and not see a white face anywhere. More significant, Harlem is still desolate, and even, in places, de-urbanized, with the only sign of normal city store life being a single corner bodega covered with signs, as though seeking shelter in letters, or a Chinese takeout with two wary Koreans behind the counter.

The anxiety about Harlem losing its soul is real, though, and Michael Henry Adams shares it. "Whatever people might say otherwise, there's tremendous fear that, apart from becoming more and more white, Harlem will just become more and more gentrified and not a welcoming place for a lot of working-class people," he said on another afternoon, sitting up on 166th Street near the old Audubon Ballroom, where Malcolm X was assassinated. Adams played a key role in saving at least the façade of the Audubon, which has been replaced by a research building for Columbia-Presbyterian and a cappuccino-and-sandwich place called X Café.

"This is America, and nobody likes poor people," he went on. "I just have this sinking feeling that the way it will ultimately be sorted out will be not through any kind of concerted planning but just by the marketplace. Over at 157th and Riverside, they're all journalists and editors who are white—they live at the Riviera and the Grinnell. The first apartment in upper Manhattan to sell for more than eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars happened over there. There's never been such a critical mass of investment and buzz and people coming. I guess it can be summed up for me simply: since the twenties, there have never been so many white people unafraid to come to Harlem."

City-planning people tend to be a touch more skeptical about the prospects of thoroughgoing gentrification in Harlem. They'll point to the large-tower public-housing blocks that are especially visible near the Harlem River. Despite everything that has been said against them, public-housing towers still largely "work" for their tenants, whose population has in the past twenty years been remarkably stable. More narrowly, they will point out that the real transformation in Harlem is not likely to happen with block-to-block rehabilitation of nineteenth-century rows, however romantic it seems, but as a result of the new body of housing, low-rise and intended for middle-class folks, which the city and state, after years of

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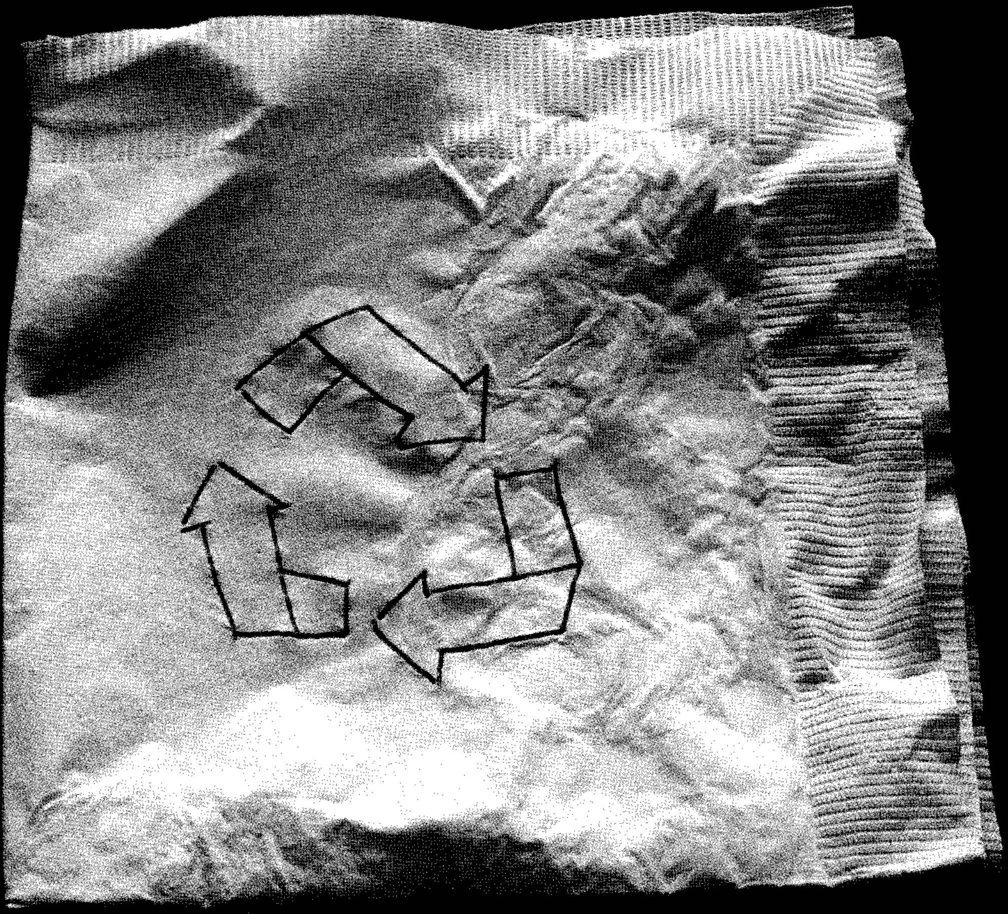

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delay, are finally building in the area. Above all, they will point out the oddest feature of the Harlem cityscape: the relative absence of small shops and shopkeepers.

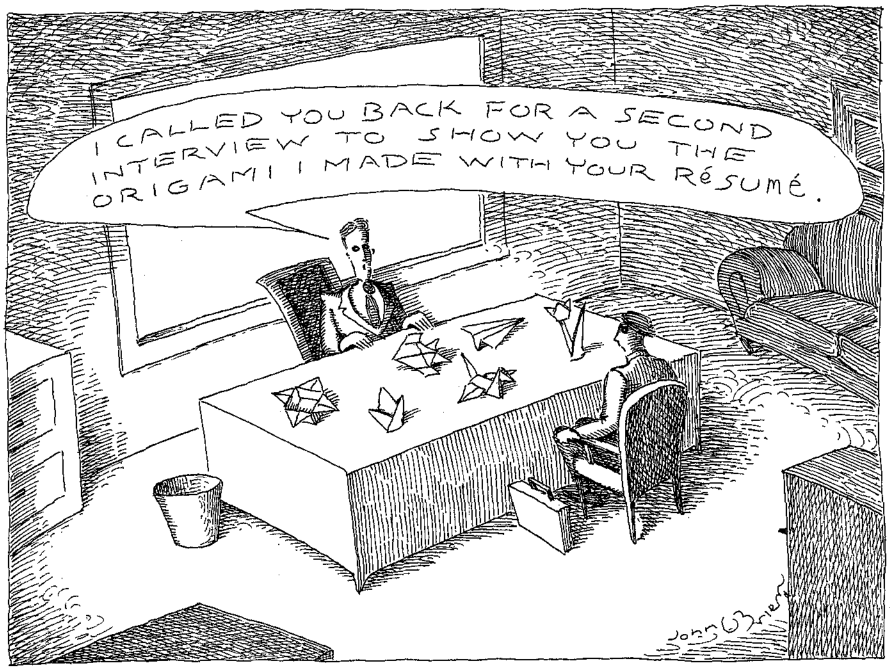
"I recall that in the fifties and even sixties the most striking thing about Harlem was the density of enterprise: manicure parlors and betting parlors and small record stores and pawnshops," one urban planner says. "That's what seems to have disappeared, and to be the hardest thing to replace. Uptown, everybody still takes the subway to shop at Macy's." The empowerment zone has worked to encourage big businesses, like the new Magic Johnson multiplex, but has not done much to encourage the usual fantastically dense New York landscape of small stores.

Why Harlem should be relatively denuded of commerce is a vexed and contentious question, with answers ranging from the famous Moynihanian idea that the breakdown of the black family diminishes the personal capital necessary for small businesses to thrive—it is the family willing to work fifteen hours a day that makes the Korean grocery successful—to the more pervasive Harlem idea that capital is capital, the banks won't give it to you if you're black, and this huge historic deficit is impossible to overcome. In either case, a lot of people think that if there is to be a transformation of Harlem that is not merely a displacement it will depend as much on the transformation of its businesses as of its buildings—which also means, some believe, explaining why the most passionate and gifted of Harlemites still tend to be people who, like Michael Henry Adams and the Reverend Butts, preach and teach rather than buy and sell.

Despite the emergency landmark resolution of Community Board 10, the A.D.C. announced plans to go ahead with a groundbreaking at the Small's Paradise site, in a full-scale ceremony with hard hats, dignitaries, and local businesspeople, under the aegis of the Reverend Butts himself. On the morning of March 13th, Adams assembled a small group of preservationist guerrillas to protest the groundbreaking. His team consisted of Ron Lester, a friend who lives in the neighborhood and hopes someday to open a night club of his own, and Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones was wearing a beautiful hat with a silk flower on it. "I used to go to Small's because it was quiet, you see," she explained. "I didn't drink, but it was a place to hear music where I could think."

Around nine o'clock, they made their way to the site in a livery cab. A police line had gone up, and a hard rain was falling.

Adams, in derby and camel-hair coat, walked over to a policeman, who looked away, as cops do, as though even thinking about talking pained him, and who finally spit out two or three short sentences. Adams returned to the cab.


I CALLED YOU BACK FOR A SECOND INTERVIEW TO SHOW YOU THE ORIGAMI I MADE WITH YOUR RÉSUMÉ.

"They've cancelled the groundbreaking," he said, with exasperation. "Or, rather, moved it indoors. They're going to hold it in the basement of the A.B.C."—the Abyssinian Baptist Church.

"What do we do now?" Lester asked.

"I suppose we go to the church and picket there," Adams said.

A small shadow of doubt seemed to cross Ron Lester's face—picketing an open site being one thing and picketing the A.B.C. itself something different, and almost sacrilegious. But, with Mrs. Jones, they walked three blocks uptown to the church, a huge neo-Gothic building that dates from the early twenties. Adams had a series of leaflets to pass out. They gathered in the doorway, and then, having been told that the groundbreaking wouldn't start until ten-thirty, went into the welcoming lobby of the church to wait. Adams seemed uneasy about enjoying the church's hospitality while plotting to overthrow its plans, but everyone settled in.

Mrs. Jones sat down confidently and then, sotto voce, announced her suspicions about the real causes of the cancellation. "When you're supposed to break ground, you break *ground,* in the rain," she said. "It's a gimmick, is what it is. So nobody could protest it."

Finally, the dignitaries began to trickle into the church. Adams walked outside, took up a position in the rain, and began to pass out leaflets. His powerful, deep voice resonated.

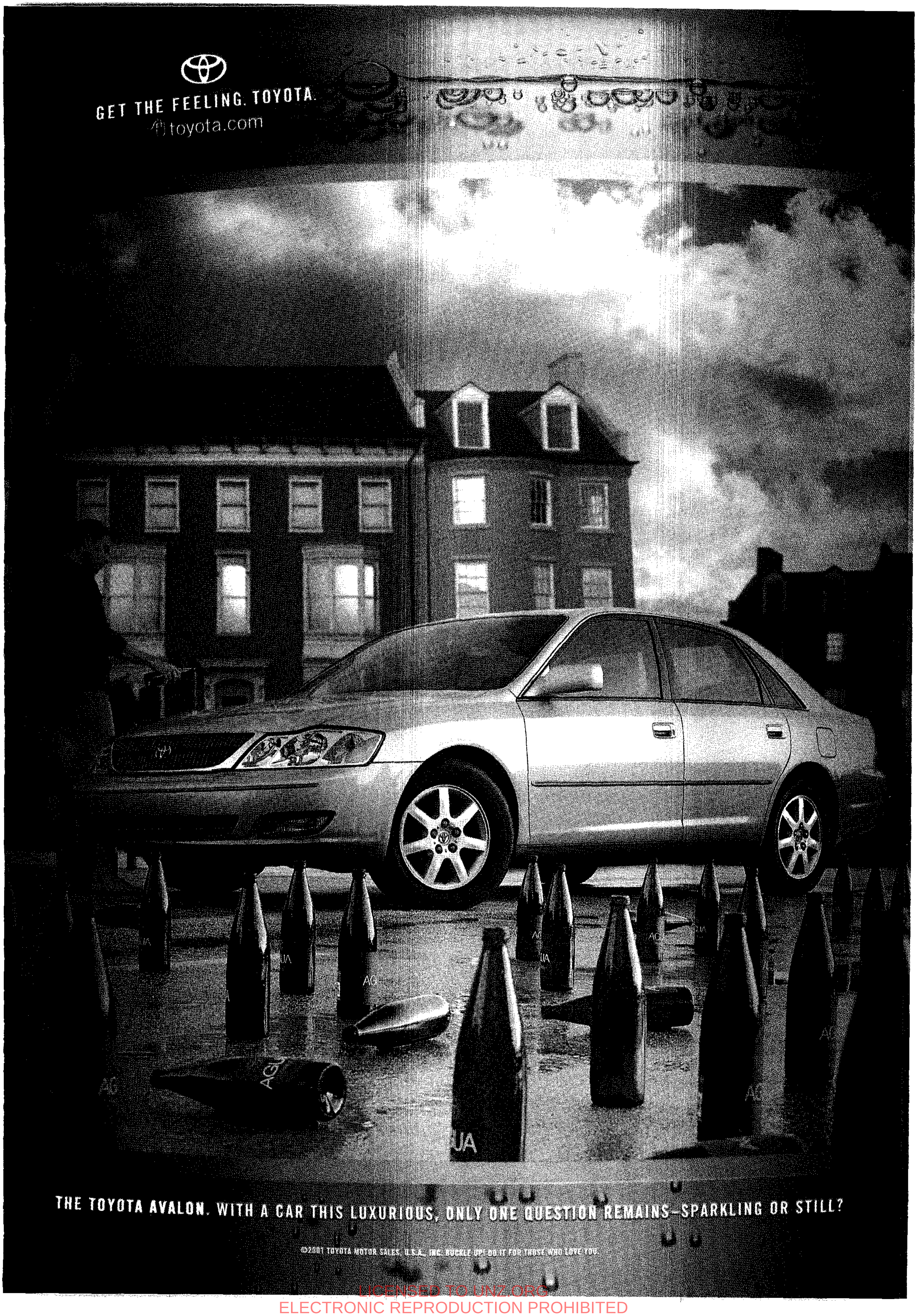
"Save Harlem!" he shouted. "Save the Paradise!" He thought about this again. "Save Paradise!" he shouted, even louder.

Most of the gathering crowd ignored him, ducking from the rain into the lobby. But when Adams tried out his "Save Paradise" again one minister turned on him indignantly. "Don't say that. That's no *paradise!* That's a night club."

"It's not a night club—it's a cultural institution!" Adams insisted, but he changed his call anyway, giving up "Save Paradise" for "Save Harlem."

Then he had an inspiration. "Keep Harlem from pancakes!" he shouted. "Save Harlem now! Save Harlem from pancakes!"

A few minutes later, in the basement of the Abyssinian Church, the groundbreaking ceremony began. An architect's rendering of the school and restaurant stood up front—it retained some of the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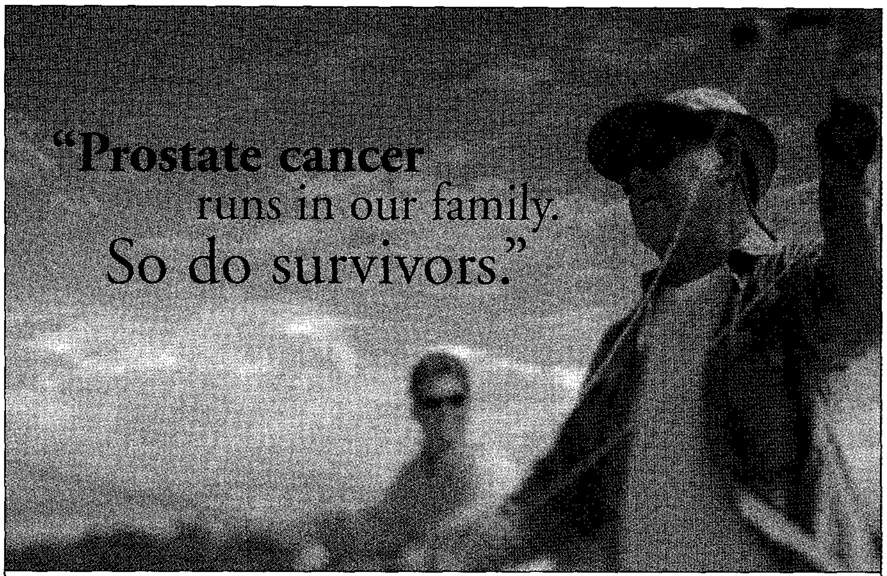

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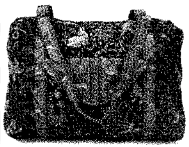

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distinctive turrets of the old building, but a narrow, stubby tower for the high school rose above them, and there was a commercial space below, in addition to the restaurant. One after another, members of the groups that had helped—to buy the land, convince the city, convince the state—paid tribute to the Reverend Butts's power as expediter and builder, and then posed in hard hats for photographs with the architect's rendering.

Eventually, the Reverend Butts took the lectern himself to thank the Harlem businessmen whom he had persuaded to buy the site. "They didn't make any money," he said, grinning. "Next time . . ." Butts, at fifty-three, is a dazzling speaker, with a rhetorical style, both satirical and serene, all his own. Many people believe that he is the most gifted politician at large in New York, and that he has declined to leave the pulpit of the A.B.C. and run for mayor only because he is not yet ready for the demotion. His favorite rhetorical device involves setting up a piety, undercutting it with a saving ironic awareness that the piety is a piety, and then reëstablishing the piety on a new basis of shared ironic understanding. He presents himself as someone with an easy relationship to power who also has a disabused grasp of the basic shuck and jive that enables power to perpetuate itself. What no one could have anticipated, even fifteen years ago, was that those two classic African-American types, the preacher and the hipster, would be reconciled in the figure of the professor, the knowing savant, who is, professionally, both sincere and skeptical. This is the great age of African-American professors, and Butts, who is also the president of SUNY College at Old Westbury, is one of them.

As Butts spoke, Adams's voice, like Hamlet's father, reverberated in the hall. "Save Harlem!" and "Save Paradise!" and "Save Harlem now!"

The Reverend chose to address him obliquely. "Our goal here today is economic revitalization," he said. "Now, you hear some people"—he smiled as Adams's voice echoed distantly—"you hear some people say they want to save Harlem. Save Harlem. Sure. But you know what wise men say. They say, Money on the wood makes the game go good. And so I need the money to save Harlem. So I went to the politicians with my hat in my hand. I went to them *on my knees*." He pauses, and smiles again, communicating to his audience the importance of being willing to go down on your knees when the cause demands it, the impossibility of the Reverend Butts ever going down on his knees to anybody, and the further point that announcing publicly that you will go down on your knees if the cause demands is just as effective a form of humility as actually doing it. "I had perspiration breaking from my brow! But all these good people came through, and now here we are with a new building for Thurgood Marshall Academy. Save our legacy now? That's really what we're doing here. We're saving our *children* now, and that's our legacy. *That's* our Harlem inheritance."

The next speaker thanked the usual bewildering list of politicians and foundation people, and mentioned the restaurant that would be installed on the ground floor. Butts walked over and reclaimed the microphone.

"Can I tell the name of the restaurant?" he asked. "It's an I-HOP. An International House of Pancakes." He said "pancakes" gravely. "Now, we don't eat a lot of pancakes. There's that old story of Sambo, you remember him—he could put away the pancakes. But this is a family-oriented restaurant, and it's a good thing for our community." He smiled again, having brought up Sambo to kill him as an insult. Then, as though reading Mrs. Jones's mind, he went on, apparently apropos of nothing: "You know, you're supposed to have a groundbreaking even if it's raining. You're supposed to be outside. But this is the black community, and we don't *play* at that."

A few minutes later, the Reverend Butts mounted the stairs to his office in the company of an inquisitive visitor. In his office, which faces 138th Street, Michael Henry Adams's ongoing protest—"Save Harlem now!" "Save Harlem from pancakes!"—was even louder.

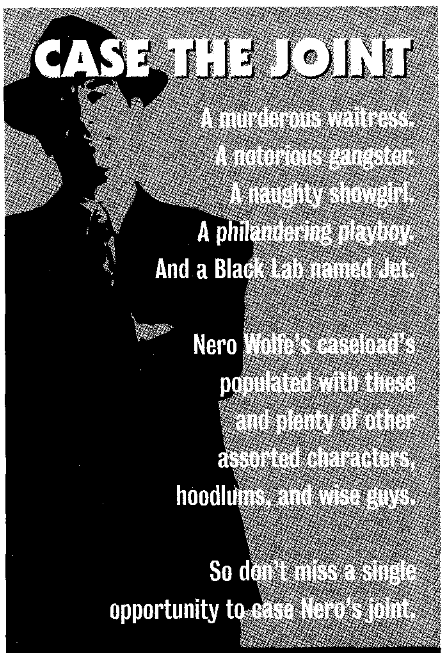
Butts offered a just barely twisted smile, and talked about his own struggles with preservation and redevelopment. "The issue is economic. Landmarking, preservation—those things cost money. Maybe they add twenty per cent to your costs. If you're waiting on money to do preservation work, that retards your progress. And Mr. Adams, much as I respect his position and appreciate him as an individual, a person—I don't think he's got any money. And I think by the time he can raise money to do one preservation project—it took us eight years to do this one—the possibility will be gone. We have a very real interest in protecting this community for poor people. One of the issues that came up a year ago was we wanted to demolish these buildings"—on 137th Street—"and I took a plan to the Community Board, and they beat me up. They beat me up." He laughs. He doesn't look beat up. "And after they finished they dusted me off and they said, 'We are with you, we don't even believe you should build all low-income housing. We believe in a mix of housing. But we will not let you tear down these buildings, because there are architects who can preserve these buildings and show you how to make them work for poor people.' So I came back with my tail tucked between my legs and I sat down with an architect, and we did it. They were right. But you have to have the people who are willing to make the investment. They want the return on their money. And you can't get that from poor people. Adams has got a good point—you may see me standing shoulder to shoulder with him on some issues. On some others . . . If I've got an opportunity to build in these vacant lots housing that's solid, attractive, and affordable for poor working families and he says, 'No, you can't tear these down because of preservation,' and, in order for me to get poor families in here, it's going to cost me twenty million more, fifty million more, whatever, then—then I'm not gonna do it."

Outside, Michael Adams's voice rose, louder than ever.

"*Save Harlem now!*"

"*Protect Harlem from pancakes!*"

The Reverend Butts paused, admira-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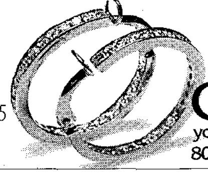
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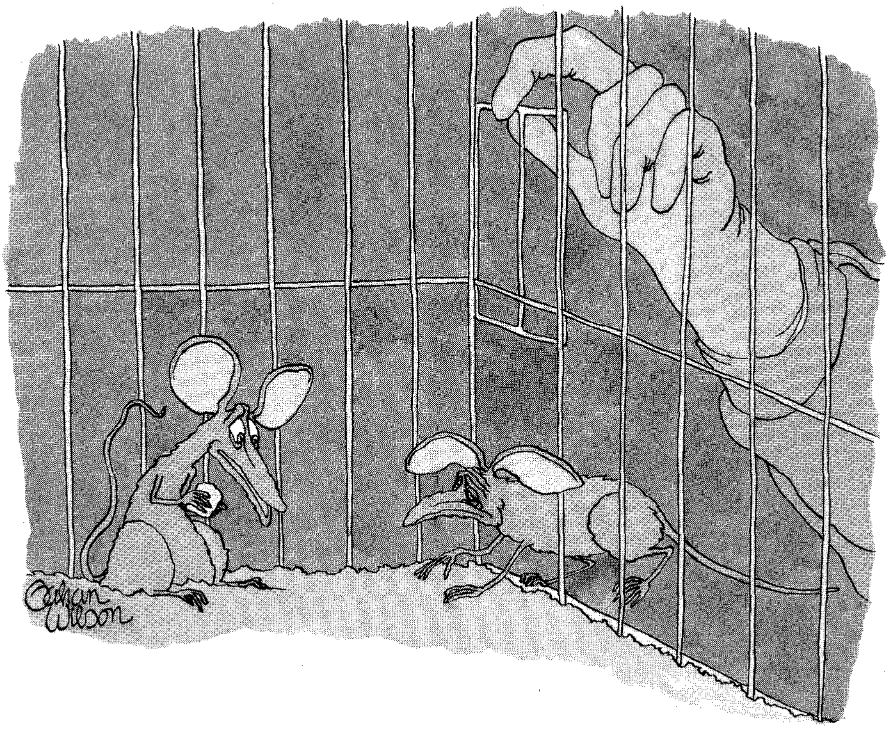

"Tough day at the labyrinth?"

• •

tion and annoyance dancing in his eyes. "I want Harlem to remain an African-American community. Not because I'm racist or racial in any sense. It's just that in the United States of America there is something to be said for Little Italy, for Chinatown, and for Harlem. And I think those men and women who come from other places to New York City are interested in getting a taste of that flavor. But if there is a young couple who move into a community, and they happen to be white, it's all right with me." He laughed. "I think what people are concerned about is that the character of the community is going to change. I was preaching one Sunday and I was trying to drive this point home. And I said I was walking down the street and it was one or two in the morning, and there was a white woman walking her poodle! Quite a switch from a homeboy walking his pit bull!"

He paused. Adams's voice had stopped now, quite suddenly.

"So I'm saying to young blacks who are moving to Scarsdale and New Jersey and Westchester, please, invest here," Butts went on, a touch more comfortably. "Black people, soon as they had two nickels to rub together they ran out of Harlem. 'Cause of crime! They didn't want their kids growing up around drugs. So they got out. And as soon as you begin cleaning up they want to come back, too. But now there's competition. What happens is you get a young gay couple, they buy a house, they fix it up, and it's gorgeous. You've been looking out at Westchester and now you want to come back and you're raising hell, 'These white people are coming in!,' and—you had a chance! Black people have to invest. When we were selling the brownstones that we renovated for three or four hundred thousand dollars, people were up in arms and then we said, 'Look, how much are you paying for rent? Nine hundred dollars a month. How much is your brother payin'? Nine hundred dollars. All the family's working—so why don't you and your brother buy the brownstone, and you take the top two floors, and give your brother the bottom two floors, and pay it off as you go along?' There's ways to do it. And you're protesting, saying, 'Save Harlem now,' which is legitimate, but at the same time you've got to be out there knocking on doors saying, 'Buy this property now!' "

The visitor asked Butts what his vision of Harlem in twenty years might be.

"Well, now. Streets would be paved with gold, of course. There'd be a chicken in every pot, and a car in every garage, where there are garages. The schools would be pristine, with well-paid teachers, and the character and charm of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century would be right here. So there would be little or no destruction of the existing buildings. It would truly be a community of mixed-income people. It would be a predominantly African community, in terms of a crossroads of the African world—Caribbean, West Indian, African, as well as African-American—but it would also have other people living here. Call them whites, if you will. Largely residential—but filled with night life! People going in and out of clubs, people going in and out of the Apollo, enjoying the sounds, and able to walk all up and down 125th Street. I want to see Harlem as part of Manhattan Island. I'm a New Yorker, I was born on East Houston Street. And I'm tired of Harlem being this strange place and everybody trembles when they think about it. But it's changing."

Suddenly, Adams was vocal again. "Save Harlem now! Save Harlem now!"

The Reverend Butts went on to his next appointment. On the street, Adams was still picketing. Butts's reasoning exasperates him: "Is not black heritage and culture worth a few extra dollars? White communities aren't asked to make these sorts of Solomonic choices between heritage on the one hand and prosperity on the other. Remember, when the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell was *building* the A.B.C., people asked him, 'Reverend Powell, how can you justify spending this kind of money on bricks and mortar?' And he responded as you would imagine a clergyman should respond: 'Man does not live by bread alone.' "

Later, Adams came out of the rain and went to have lunch at Bayou, a good Cajun-Creole place on Lenox Avenue. In the restaurant, he explained why he had suddenly fallen silent. "Oh, when I was shouting I got into something of an altercation with a man who came up and said, very bluntly, 'Save Harlem from pancakes? Well, *you're* fat.' Which I'm not really, so I said, 'Well, *you're* fat, too.' It wasn't exactly a Renaissance moment, I suppose. But it's all part of the struggle." ♦

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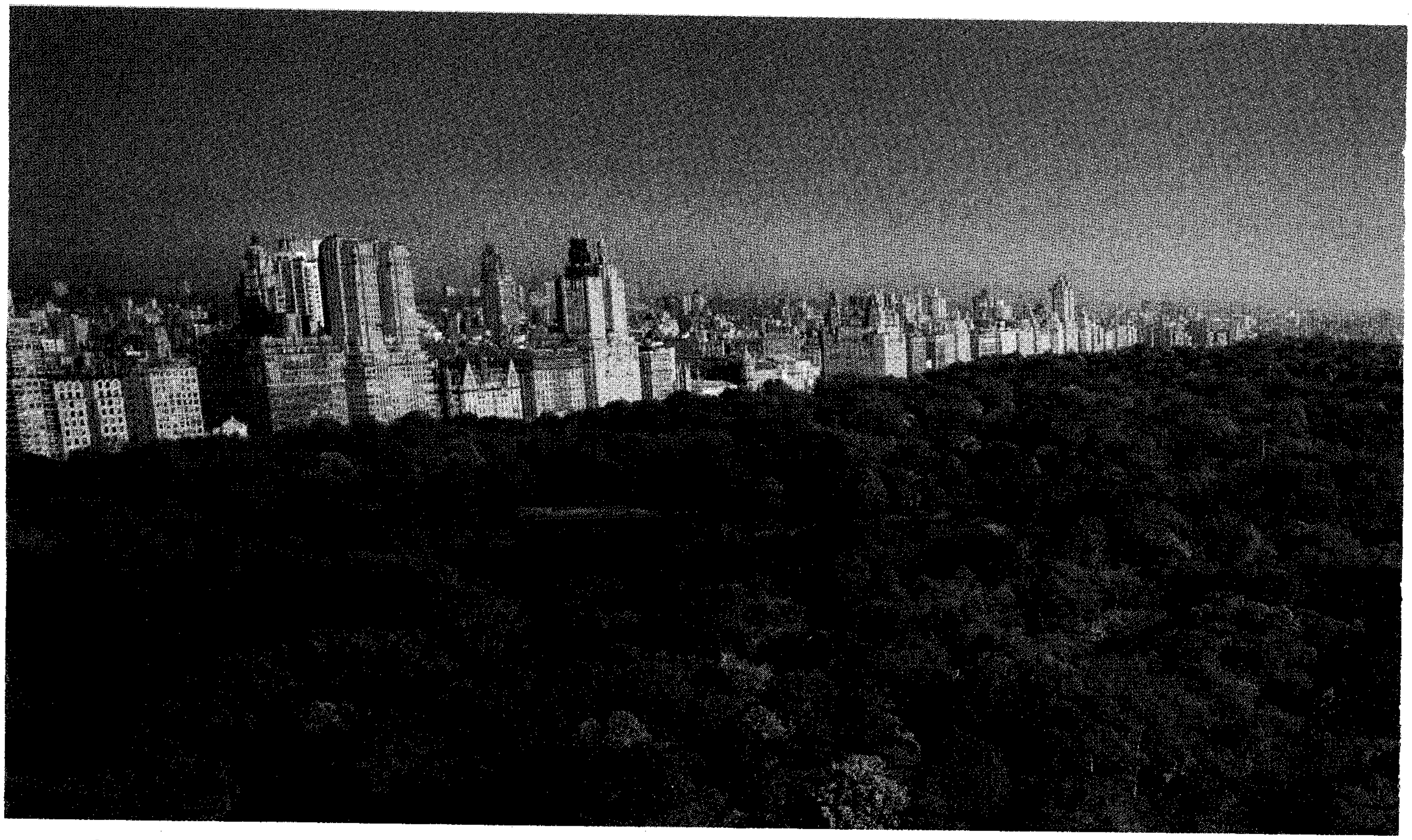

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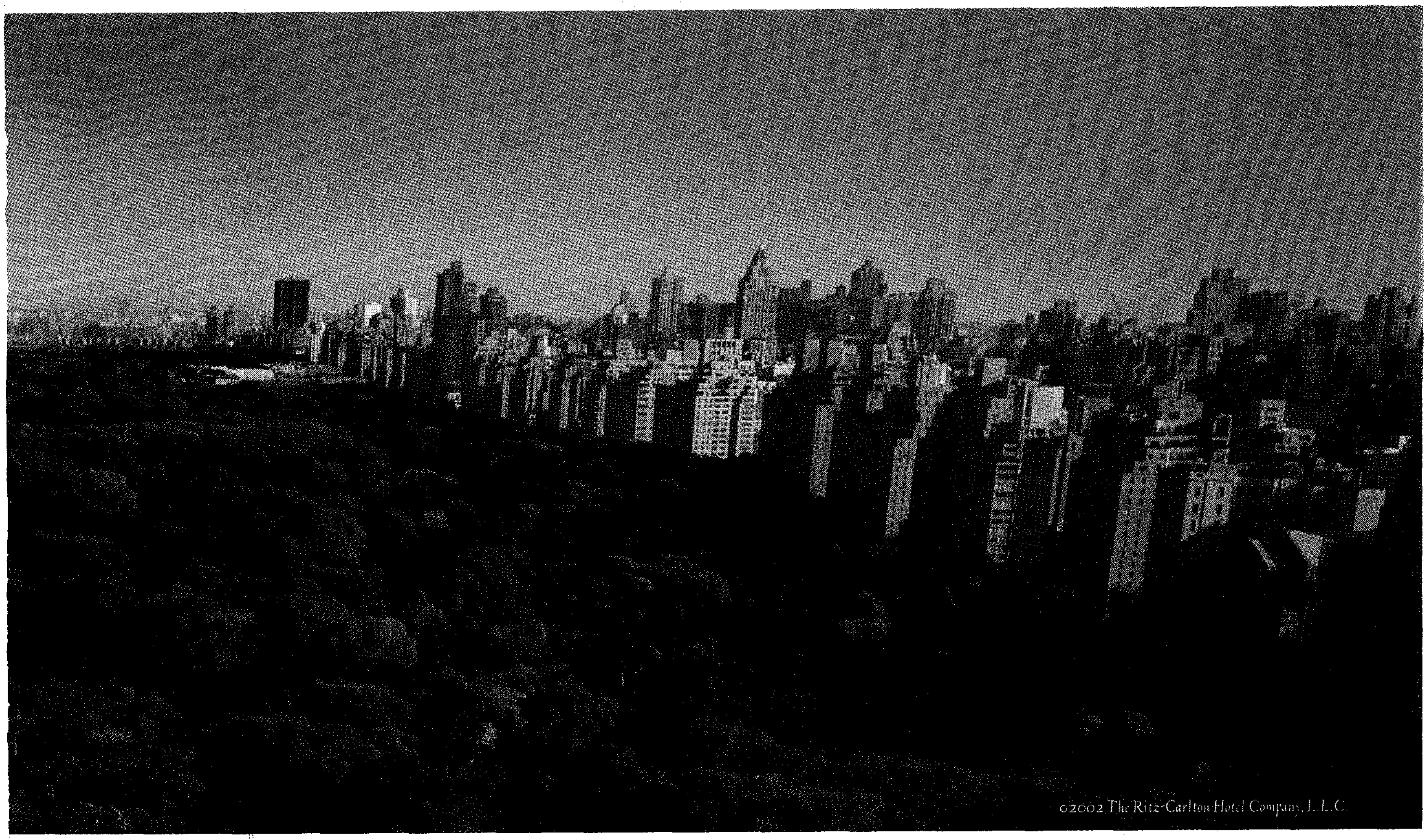

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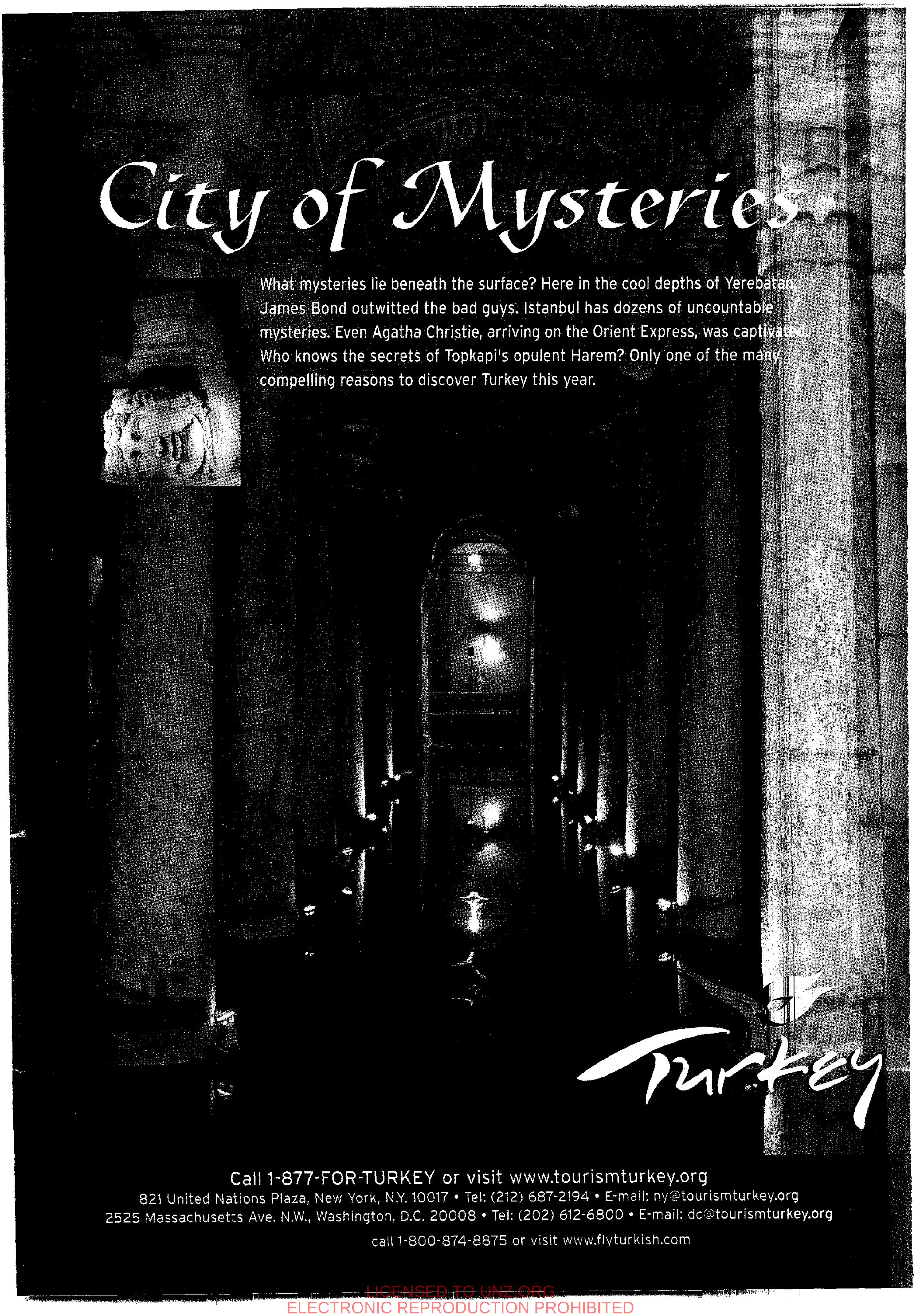

City of Mysteries

What mysteries lie beneath the surface? Here in the cool depths of Yerebatan, James Bond outwitted the bad guys. Istanbul has dozens of uncountable mysteries. Even Agatha Christie, arriving on the Orient Express, was captivated. Who knows the secrets of Topkapi's opulent Harem? Only one of the many compelling reasons to discover Turkey this year.

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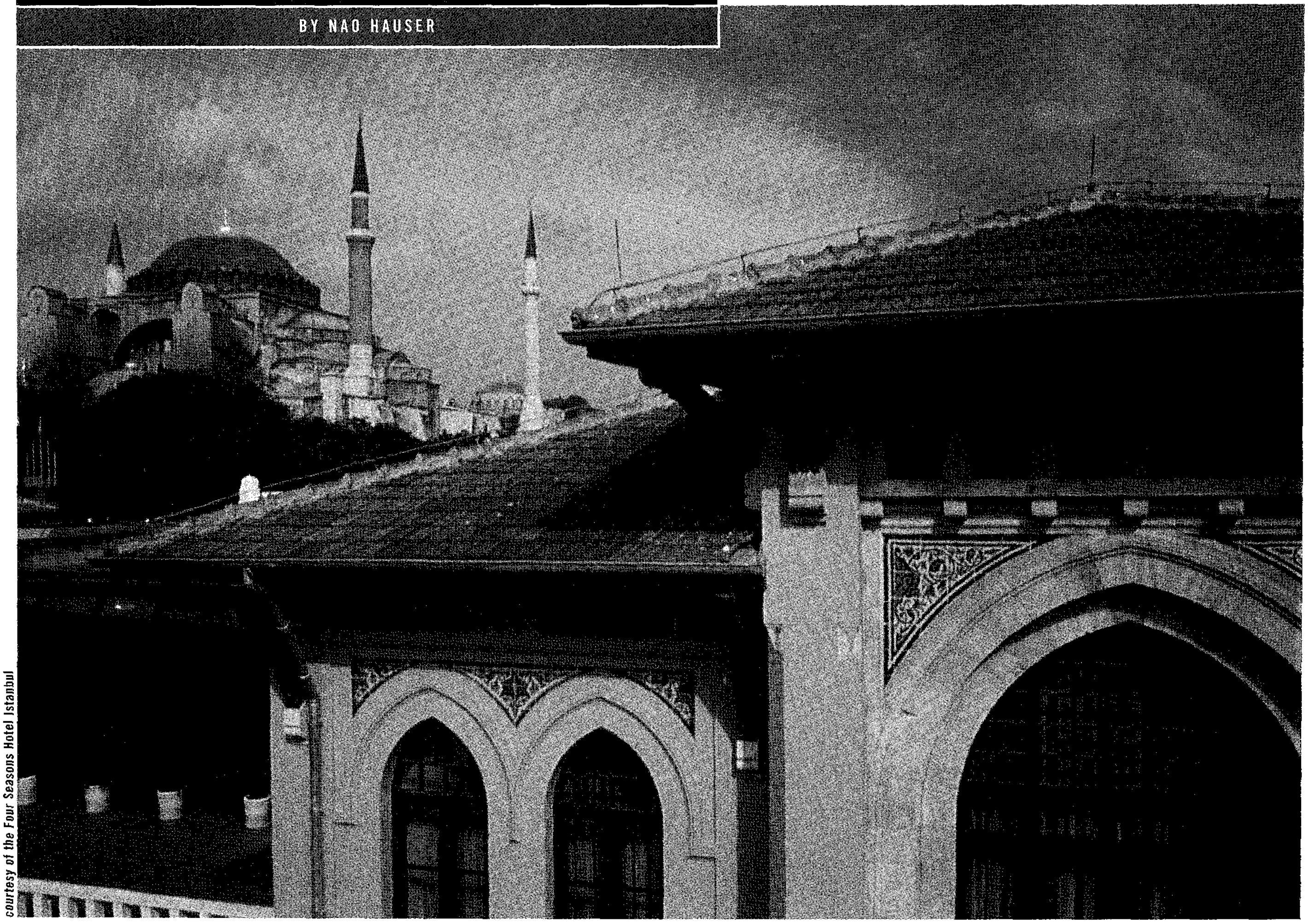
What first-class travellers want these days is a sanctuary, a private vantage, whether the view is of mountains or ocean, city or jungle, a place where all the senses can be indulged, and where every need will be met. Pampering is essential. "That's what my clients want," says Sue Brown, a Florida travel consultant who specializes in deluxe arrangements. "The service has to make them feel like they're the most important guests."

Yet service alone is not sufficient. There also has to be something magnificent, whether natural or man-made, about the surroundings. "If you don't have that," says Chicago consultant Cheryl Sturm, who develops top-of-the-line tours, "then it's just a fancy hotel. To be truly first-class, travel has to also be about what's compelling to visit, what's fantastic to see."

Places where it all comes together are unique and precious, and can be found just about anywhere. Istanbul, for example, has the Four Seasons hotel that was voted best in Europe for the past two years by readers of a leading travel publication. Is it the historic building, with only sixty-five rooms, that makes it the best? Or is it the personalized service and great food? Or maybe it's the rooftop terrace with views of the Blue Mosque? Yes and no. The bustle of Istanbul makes the hotel a welcomed oasis. But it would be merely

as good as it gets

BY NAO HAUSER



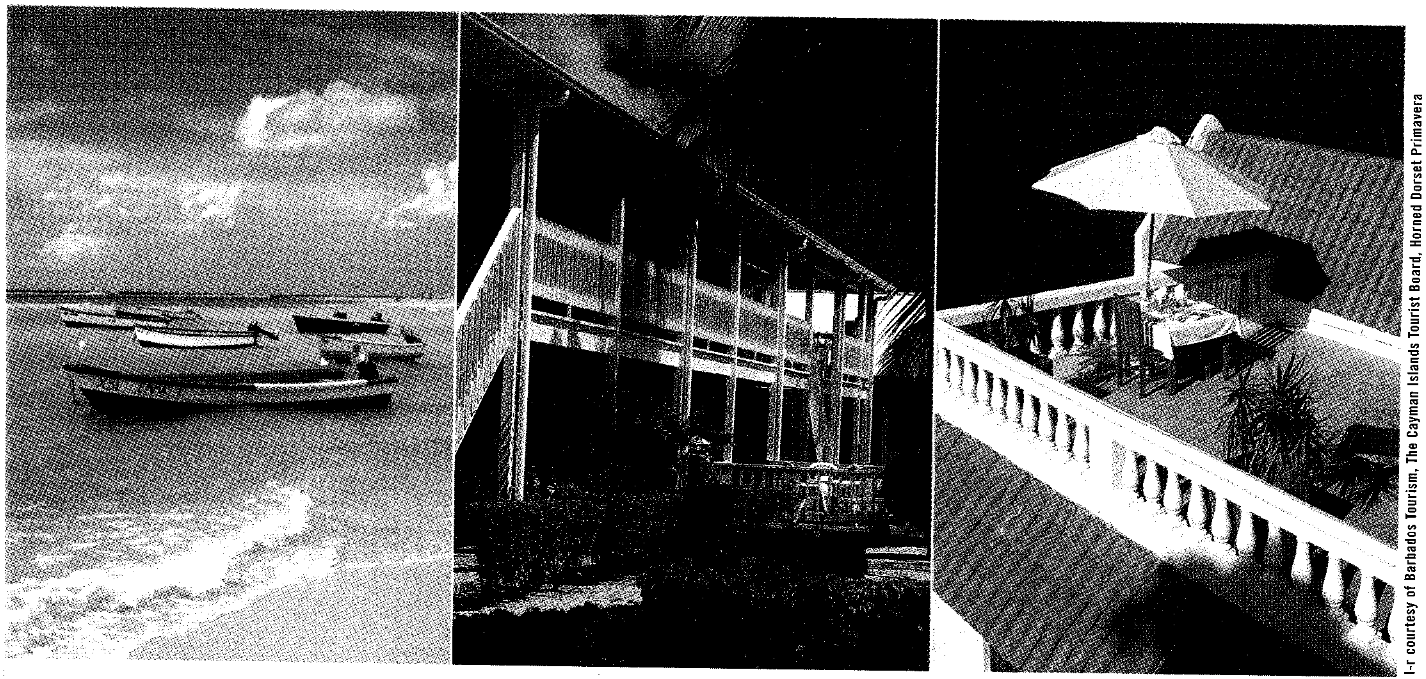
courtesy of the Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul

VIEW FROM THE TOP

The Blue Mosque as seen from the rooftop terrace of the lauded Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul.

a lovely retreat if it weren't surrounded by Topkapi Palace, great bazaars, and the treasures of Hagia Sophia, as well as centuries of art and architecture and the intricate fabric of sights and sounds that no amount of money can buy.

Current longings tilt toward private outposts, such as islands that guests can share with very few others. James Badham, editor-in-chief of *Islands* magazine, lauds the upscale attraction of the private resort, Fregate Island in the Seychelles—Indian Ocean islands that he finds "really incredible" for their white-sand beaches, dramatic granite boulders, and translucent waters. In French Polynesia, Badham has noticed that French travellers tend to choose Moorea as "the place that has the best beaches." But he makes a counterclaim for Le Méridien Bora Bora, which has, he says, "one of the most spectacular settings in the world. There are views of the island's sacred mountain, Mount Otemanu, from every angle."

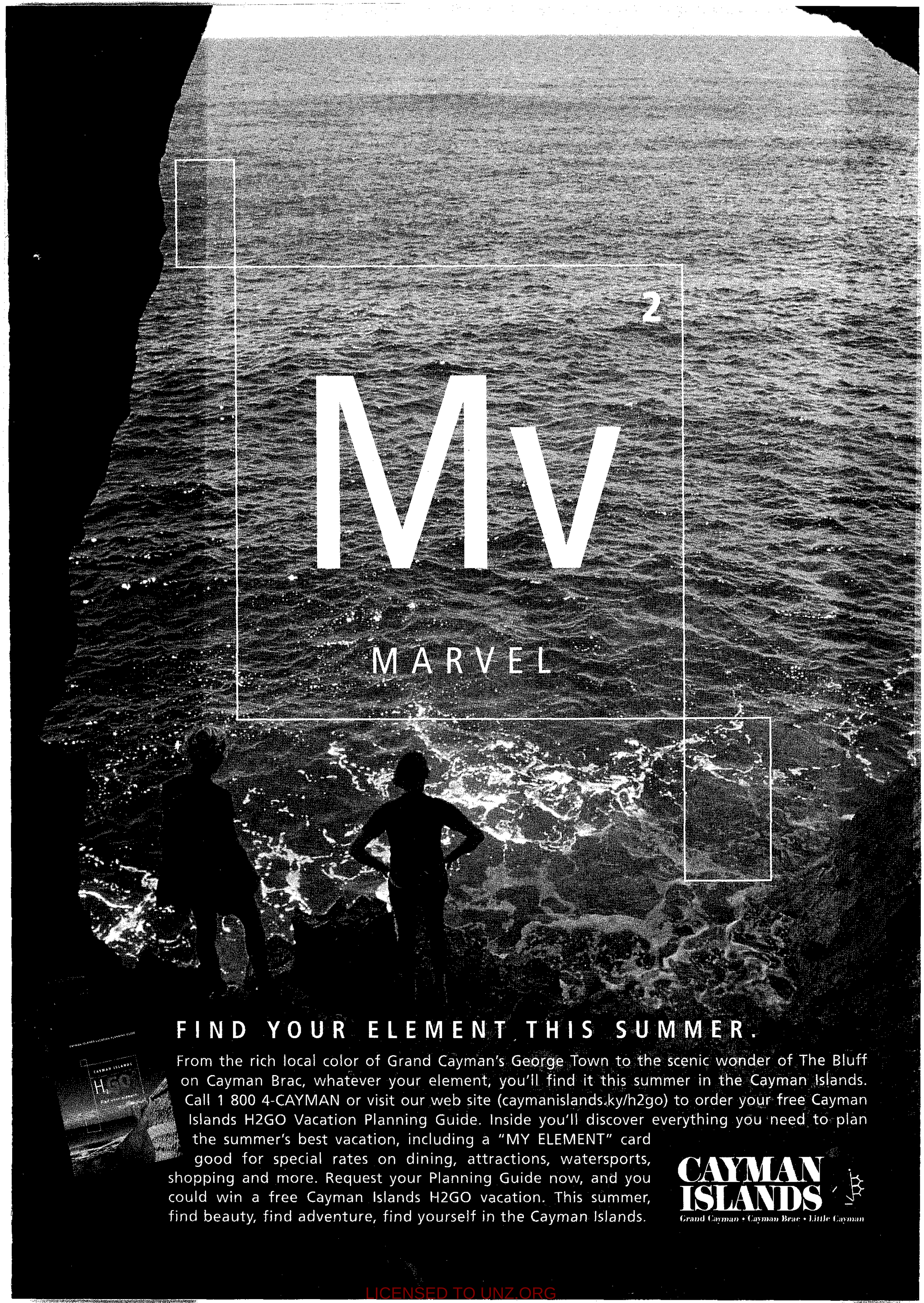


l-r courtesy of Barbados Tourism, The Cayman Islands Tourist Board, Horned Dorset Primavera

RETREAT TO TRANQUILITY

(Left to Right) Beached Bajan boats; a Little Cayman beach resort; and a view of the sea from the Horned Dorset Primavera in Puerto Rico.

Hawaii, and particularly the Big Island, has never lost its away-from-it-all allure. Badham talks of his own wonderment at seeing the active volcanoes there, of observing the earth actually being formed. Consultant Sue Brown (800-637-5577; www.suebrowntravel.com) is sending travellers to Hualalai, the Four Seasons resort on the North Kona Coast. "It's like Bali in Hawaii," says Brown. Incorporating the magnificent beauty of the site in its design, the resort underscores how such riches can be enhanced with its large collection of Hawaiian art. (Art lovers departing for the islands from Los Angeles might want to take in the big Andy Warhol show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, May 25th to August 18th, the exhibit's only venue in North America.)



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JET SET

Havens of privacy extend also to transport, with private-jet travel seeing a marked upswing. "I wish it were for a better reason," says Greg Brinkman, manager of Excel Aire (800-773-9235; www.excelaire.com), "but since September 11th, my business has been very good." What he offers is small jets (for up to six passengers), medium (for eight), and large (for fourteen) that you can charter from Islip airport on Long Island to anywhere in the world. His service represents the most basic form of private-jet travel: You call and give them the number of passengers, the

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INSIDE INFORMATION
AT YOUR SERVICE

A concierge responds to guests' needs, within or outside the hotel. From the mundane to the outlandish, he is prepared to deliver whatever, whenever. Here are some stories from the front.

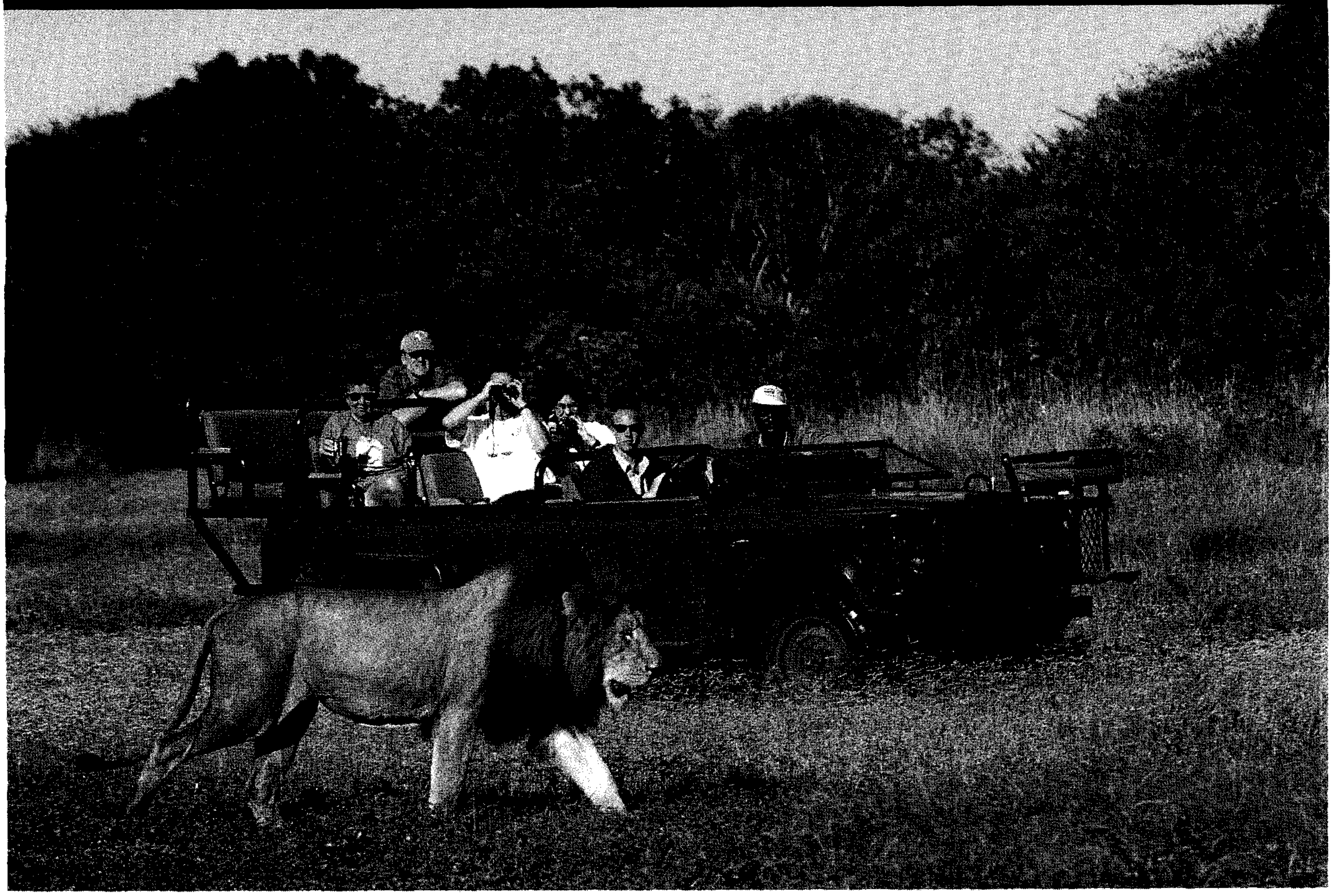
London Bradley Davis is the head concierge at The Connaught, where he has worked for nine years. He is often asked to score reservations at the original Gordon Ramsey's three-star Chelsea restaurant, but the most memorable seat he was ever asked to procure was behind the wheel of a race car. "A Russian guest wanted to drive a Formula One car, so I found someone who knew someone who knew someone else," Davis recounts, and the guest got to drive his dream car at a track outside London.

Paris Joseph Aperto, who has been at Sofitel Le Parc for fifteen years, is proud of being able (with twenty hours notice) to get guests window-side tables at La Tour d'Argent and access to Louis Vuitton on Sundays, when the store is normally closed. Also, he notes proudly, "I can get seats on fully booked planes through Air France, and I have arranged VIP service for luggage and customs."

Vienna Michael Moser, a staffer at the Hotel Imperial for nineteen years, recalls two challenges that went beyond the usual requests for opera tickets and such. For a couple of patrons—she from Austria, he from Russia—Moser arranged the wedding they wanted in Venice. From finding the church, to navigating the Italian legal requirements, to securing the gondolier and planning the wedding dinner, he took care of all the details. For a Japanese guest who wanted to acquire a toy dachshund, Moser went to a local breeder, waited for the birth and weaning, and then got the pet through quarantine and sent it to its new home in Japan.

New York David Ibarra, who has been at the Waldorf Towers for fourteen years, has a policy of never saying no, "as long as it's legal." He will never forget a frequent guest who called from his home in the Middle East to ask the concierge if he could arrange for jet transport and tickets to a sold-out Michael Jackson concert in Spain. Moreover, the man wanted his kids seated onstage! "As luck would have it," reports Ibarra, "because Frank Sinatra used to live in the Towers, I knew his concert promoter, and he got me the key contact in Spain." Proving once again that it's all about who you know. –*N.H.*

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL.



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destination, and when you want to go. What the company provides in addition to luxury seating and catering, says Brinkman, is "no lines at the airport, no set departure times, and the safety of knowing who else is on board." The cost is not much more than a full fare, first-class commercial flight.

Case in point: For twenty-two thousand dollars, a medium jet would take four couples to St. Martin, wait four days at the airport there, and bring the eight passengers back to Long Island. (American Airlines' top ticket, business class, is about two thousand dollars per person.) To continue on to St. Bart's would require booking a second plane from St. Martin for twelve hundred dollars for the group, round-trip.

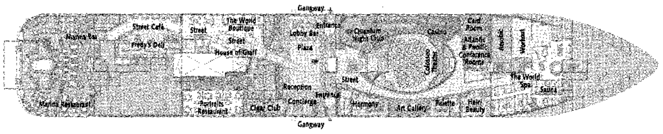
More commonly, passengers are booking passage through travel agents on one of the set-itinerary, private-jet trips offered by four companies worldwide. Brian Robertson (800-969-3220; www.robertsontravel.com), a leading specialist in private-jet vacations, reports a doubling in demand, roughly, for such trips since 9/11. One that's particularly popular is a twenty-eight-day tour of the South Pacific priced at about fifty thousand dollars, which includes airfare, first-class hotels, meals, and everything else. Stops include Tahiti, Fiji, and New Zealand, which are all very appealing, Robertson says, for their "harmonious environments."

Another option that Robertson can arrange: private, all-inclusive tours for small groups that design their own itinerary. Recently, four couples booked a two-week tour of American landmarks from the Adirondacks to Bryce Canyon for about thirty-six-thousand dollars per person. The trip was a rousing success and, in the fall, the same group is heading for more national parks.

courtesy of ResidenSea

WORLD AT SEA

A living room in one of the private residences aboard ResidenSea designed by New York-based Juan Pablo Molyneux.


Gangway
Street Café
Street
The World Boutique
Entrance
Marina Bar
Fredy's Deli
Street
House of Graff
Lobby Bar
Plaza
Quantum Night Club
Casino
Card Room
Atlantic & Pacific Conference Rooms
Colosseo Theater
Street
The World Spa
Sauna
Reception
Entrance
Concierge
Marina Restaurant
Portraits Restaurant
Cigar Club
Harmony
Art Gallery
Palette
Hair Beauty
Gangway

SEA WORTHY

There's a new dimension of privacy at sea aboard ResidenSea, an opulent floating apartment complex that continuously circumnavigates the globe. It features a hundred and ten private apartments (from $2.25 to $7.5 million) and eighty-eight guest suites, along with a tennis court, two swimming pools, two driving ranges, and varied restaurants and bars. After its inaugural voyage to the Cannes Film Festival, just a few of its hundred and twenty ports of call scheduled for this year include the Grand Prix in Monaco and the British Open. Rentals on the ResidenSea are also available.

Another first-class prerogative at sea this year: viewing the total solar eclipse December 4th from Orient Lines' luxury liner Marco Polo. Its "Southern Africa" cruise will be at the best vantage point, off the southeast coast of Africa in the Mozambique Channel, with a team of astronomers and space experts on hand

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to observe and explain. The twenty-day itinerary (November 23–December 12) also includes a deluxe big-game safari in Kenya at reserves in the Aberdare Mountains and at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

courtesy of Sandy Lane

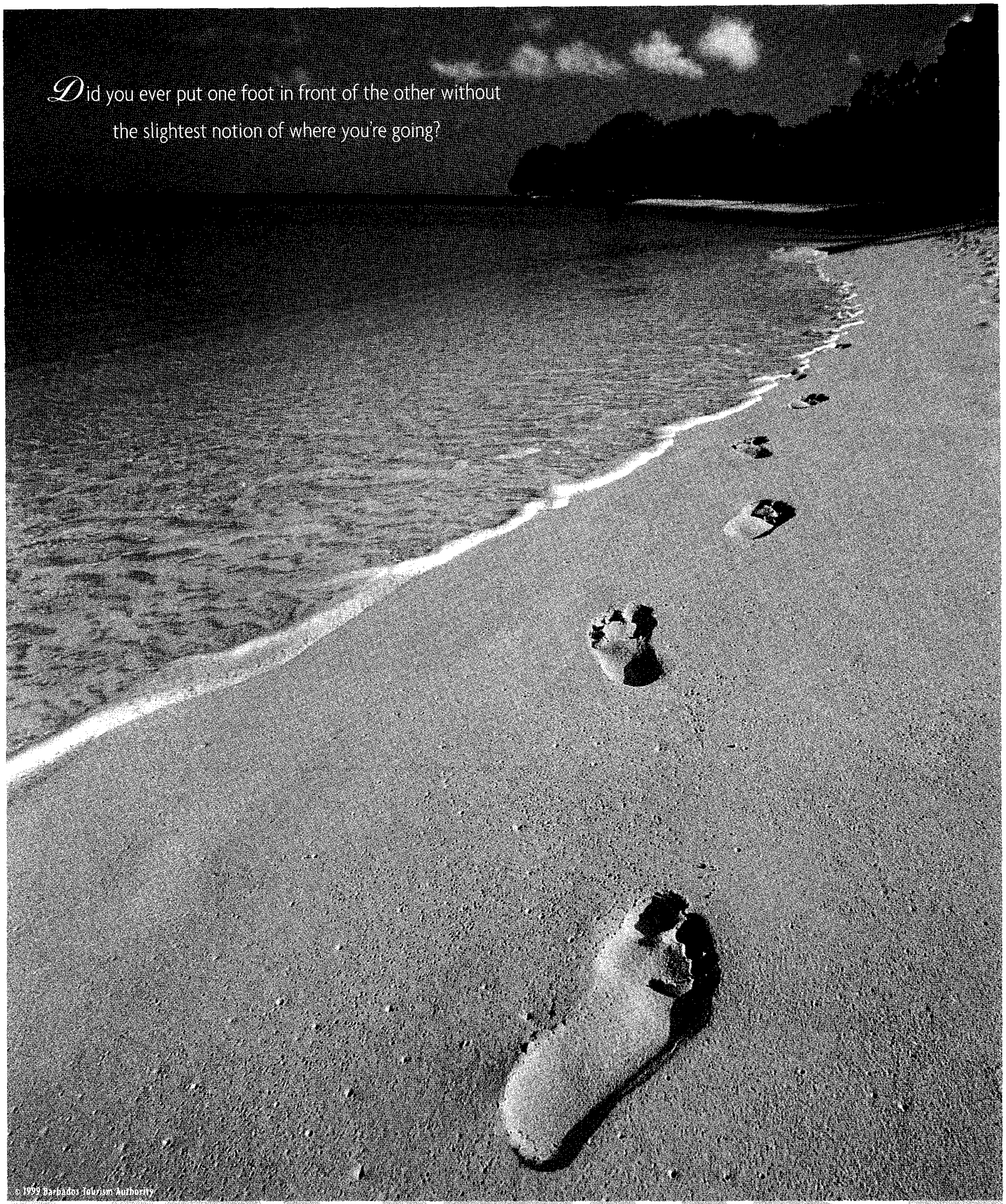
DIVE RIGHT IN!

The 45,000-square-foot spa at the newly opened Sandy Lane in Barbados.

ESTATE OF THE ART

"People now want their room to have it all," says Barbara Gallay, of Linden Travel Bureau in New York (212-421-3320) where she specializes in luxury accommodations. That means plasma-screen TV with Internet access, DVD and CD players, a second bathroom, and a selection of pillows and duvets or blankets. In some circumstances, it also means having a butler on call. The room that sets the tone of the century right now, says Gallay, is at the newly reopened Sandy Lane in Barbados. Lights automatically come on as you enter the room. If you're inside, a sensor alerts the maid so that she doesn't barge in. "Buttons control everything from the drapes to music on the terrace," says Gallay. "It's the most up-to-date room I've seen." And on the downside? "You feel so wonderful in it, you never want to go out." Not that there aren't plenty of incentives to do so. The hundred-and-twelve-room Sandy Lane has two Tom Fazio-designed golf courses, as well as deluxe treatment suites and a yoga studio at its fabulous spa.

(continued)


Did you ever put one foot in front of the other without
the slightest notion of where you're going?

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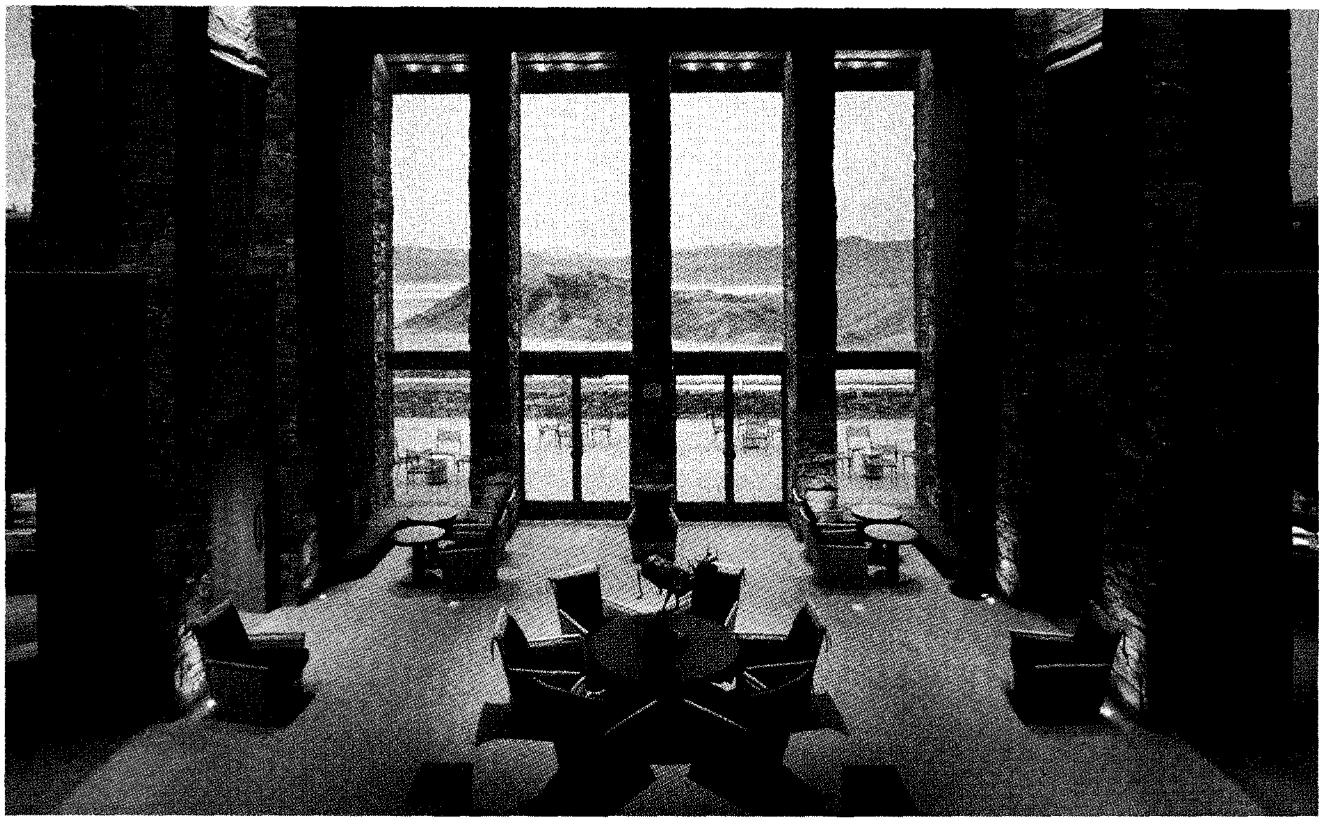
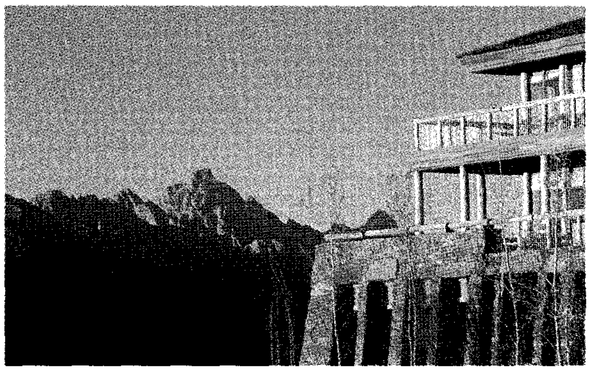


courtesy of Amanresorts

THE PINNACLE OF RELAXATION

(This Page) The Snake River Range dominates the views from the Amangani Resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.



INSIDE INFORMATION

HIGHBROW BROWSING

Bookmark the following URLs for access to providers of first-class travel services.

Charter Jets The ultimate perk, Air Royale's **(www.airroyale.com)** private-plane charters ferry Hollywood and corporate stars alike. If you're lusting for a Learjet but can't justify the expense, check Air Royale's site for special offers and one-way trips that can be booked for less when "empty legs" are available.

Travel Agents Virtuoso **(www.virtuoso.com)** is a network of top travel consultants dedicated to making vacation dreams come true. If you want to go hot-air ballooning in the Australian outback or spend a few days bonefishing in the Seychelles, assay these experts.

Hotels Known for pampering guests, Mandarin Oriental Hotels **(www.mandarinoriental.com)** is constructing an ultraluxe 250-room property in the AOL Time Warner Center overlooking New York's Central Park. Due to open in 2003, it's set to house fine retail shops as well as become the new home of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Cruises Radisson Seven Seas **(www.rssc.com)** will be taking bookings this summer through travel agents for the Seven Seas Voyager, a luxurious seven-hundred-passenger, all-balcony, all-suite ship currently under construction. Her Western European maiden voyage is scheduled for April 1, 2003.

Tours Abercrombie & Kent **(www.abercrombiekent.com)** arranges tours on all seven continents. The new A&K Active series takes adventurous travellers to exotic destinations, where sporting activities enliven their itineraries. You can download brochures and book at the site.

–Susan Breslow Sardone

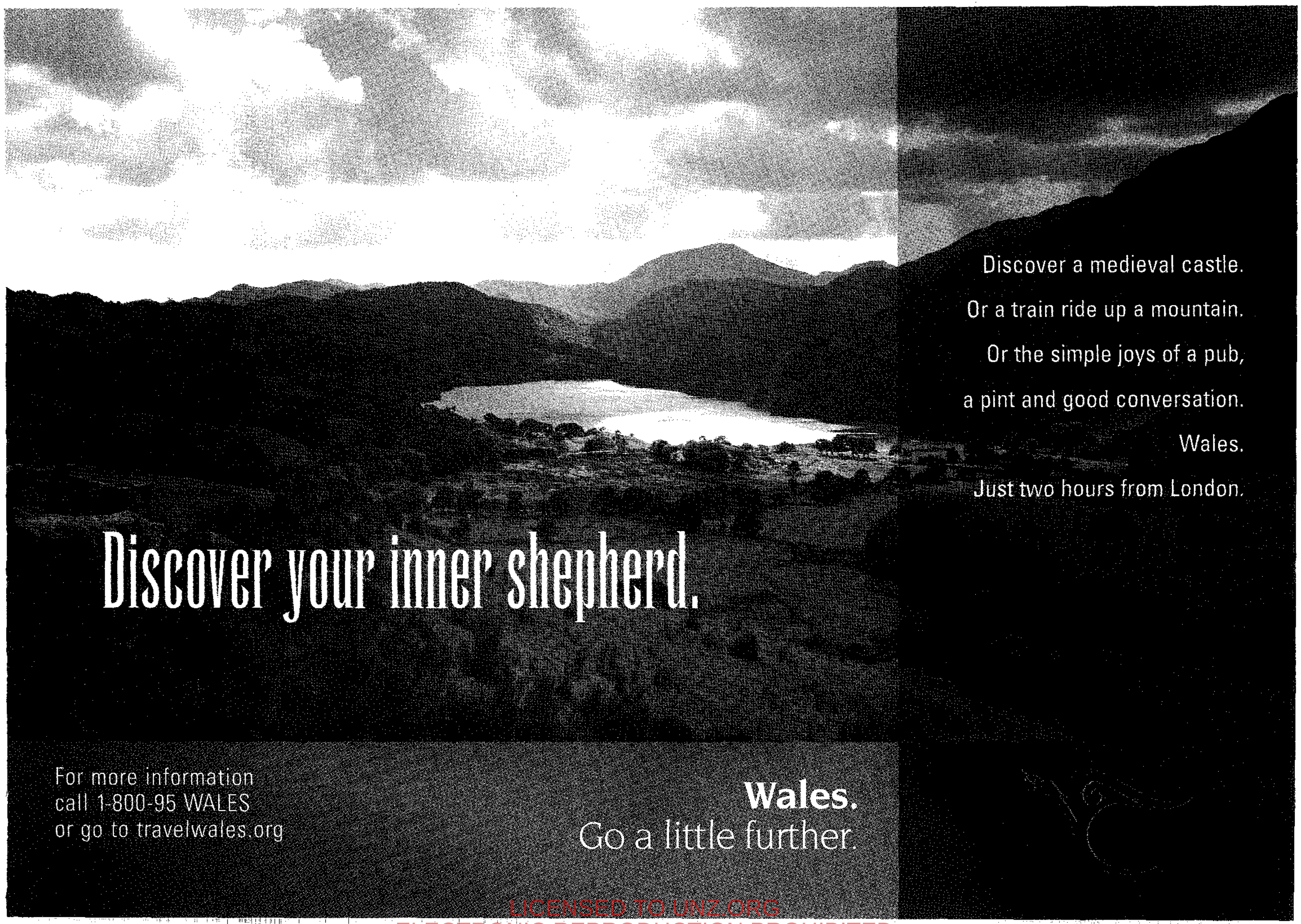
BODY AND SOUL

Yoga and meditation are showing up more and more often on the spa menus that distinguish the most lavish resorts. "Guests are looking for mental relaxation along with massages and wraps," notes Damian McCabe, who caters to spa customers through her Washington, D.C.-area company, McCabe Bremer Travel (800-747-8401). She has been fielding an increasing number of requests for European resorts with spas, which tend to offer more in the way of cosmetic treatments, such as wrinkle reduction, than the fitness-oriented American oases. Her first-class favorites are Villa D'Este on Lake Como and the Royal Park Evian spa programs at Evian-les-Bains, on the French shore of Lake Geneva. But her partner, Sandra Bremer, has found the confluence of all sensory indulgence at the Amangani Resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. No small part of the rejuvenation here comes from simply staring out at the mountains—whether from guest suites in the all stone-and-wood lodge or from the "infinity" pool just beyond its doorstep. Native American art complements the striking architecture, and the gracious tone of the excellent service is relaxed and homey. To revive both body and soul, there are numerous spa ministerings, such as botanical rubs and Thai-style massage, offered in the skin-soothing climate of steam rooms.

In California, The Lodge at Sonoma, a Renaissance Hotel & Spa, holds its own inspiring vistas. In this corner of the country, the poolside views are of the Mayacamas Mountains. And here, the peace of great vineyards reigns—inspiring the fresh,

courtesy of The Lodge at Sonoma

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'
Poolside at The Lodge at Sonoma, a Renaissance Hotel & Spa.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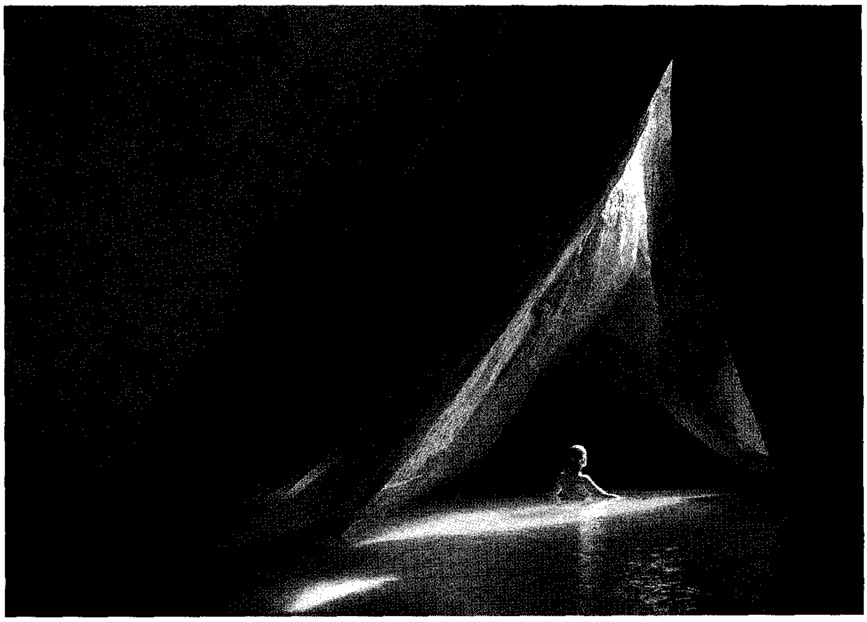
Cal-Mediterranean cuisine served at the hotel's Carneros restaurant. All the more incentive to shape up at the spa, which also features indigenous ingredients, such as grape extract and hot mineral waters from springs located on the grounds. There are sixteen treatment areas, with four outdoors in a flower garden. And if the massages and other body treatments don't leave you feeling thoroughly pampered, you can always summon a "bath butler" to draw you an antioxidant grape seed (red or white) wine bath. Or book the Raindance Suite, with its private fireplace, sauna, and monsoon shower that are so well suited to the equally important therapy of romance.

ISLAND IDYLLS

Perhaps the most fragile aspect of first-class travel is the balance between stunning landscapes and the development that brings every comfort to them. Recognizing the importance of this balance, the British Virgin Islands is highlighting the protection of its national parks, which make up eleven per cent of the territory. This year the government has set up a board of high-profile trustees, including Peter Jennings, Walter Cronkite, and Cliff Robertson, to promote programs designed for biodiversity management, marine conservation, and historic preservation.


courtesy of the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board

EXTREME SANCTUARY

A rock formation in a national park on Virgin Gorda lures bathers.

Visitors can well appreciate what there is to protect at the private, eight-hundred-and-fifty-acre Guana Island off the northeast coast of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands.

Maintained as a small resort in a nature preserve, Guana Island has only fifteen stone cottages and one private beach house, so very few people share the seven beaches and the privilege of sighting such rare bird species as the Caribbean roseate flamingo. But if a group of up to twenty-six wants to book an island all to itself, Necker Island, developed by Richard Branson

INSIDE INFORMATION

HEAD OF THE CLASS

Not since the velvet-rope barricades of Studio 54 have VIP lines meant so much to so many. The necessary government takeover of airport security has mandated changes in who goes to the head of the line (i.e., no one), and frequent flyers and first- and business-class passengers are required to join the inspection queues in progress. But once aloft, your airline can make a huge difference in your comfort level. Here's our report card.

Top International Carriers

Singapore Airlines The gold standard, Singapore Air, named best international carrier by *Condé Nast Traveler* readers, has a modern fleet, top service, superior elite seating, tasty fare, and inflight diversions (including Nintendo) that are earning it raves.

Cathay Pacific Its first-class flat-bed seats make long hauls between JFK, LAX, SFO, and Hong Kong a truly soporific experience.

Lufthansa First- and business-class guests flying in May and June will dine on meals designed by the internationally acclaimed Paul Bocuse. The gourmet treatment is part of the airline's ongoing Star Chefs program.

Japan Airlines The new Skysleeper Solo seats put passengers in first-class pods, and passengers' hunger is sated by bento boxes.

Virgin Atlantic Virgin's redesigned, award-winning Upper Class cabin cossets passengers in high style. Individual amenity kits come packed with lip balm, aromatherapy potions, and the like, and you can still get a 2 A.M. manicure at thirty thousand feet.

Top Domestic Carriers

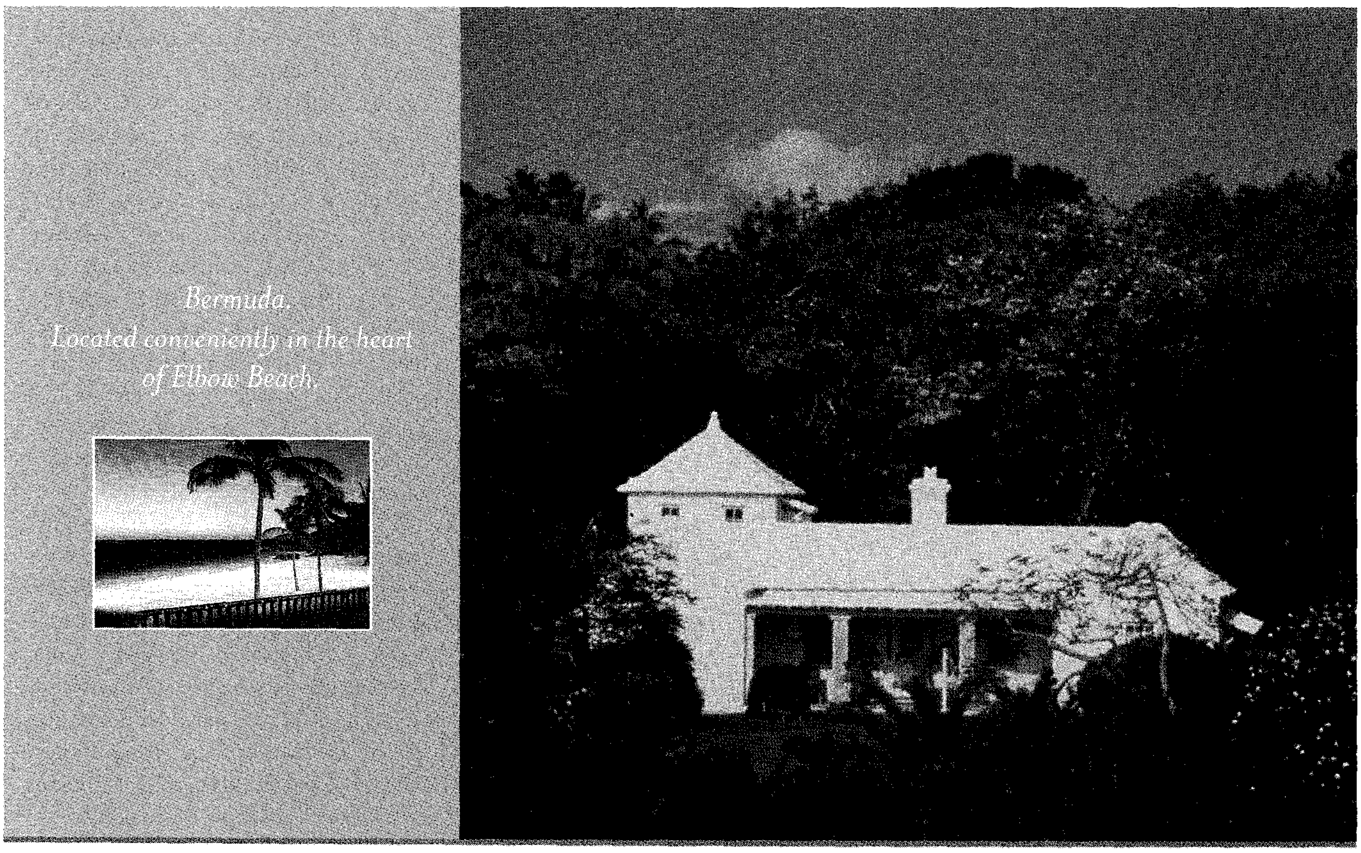
Midwest Express The No. 1-ranked U.S. airline in the last edition of the *Zagat Airline Survey*, Midwest designates all seats as business class but sells them at coach prices.

JetBlue New planes, low fares, easy on-line transactions, and expanded routes make this all-coach airline many New Yorkers' favorite.

Southwest For the last ten years, this smart operator tops the list at the Department of Transportation for receiving the fewest customer complaints. The carrier has also reintroduced its Friends Fly Free program with fares starting at $59 each way, systemwide.

American Airlines They've removed seats from coach to add more leg room. Who's going to be the first to point out that we could also use a skosh more hip room?

–S.B.S.



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ELBOW BEACH BERMUDA

The Leading Hotels of the World

(Island Idylls continued)

of Virgin Atlantic at the northeastern extreme of the BVIs, can be rented for rates starting at fifteen thousand dollars a day. The seventy-four-acre rocky hideaway has a ten-room villa, two Balinese-style cottages, water sports, tennis, and thirty-one staff members ready to serve. Another private option: Leave land behind and charter a yacht with crew from The Moorings (800-368-9991; www.moorings.com) to sail among the islands under sun and stars.

INSIDE INFORMATION

CARRY ON

With airlines limiting carry-on to one piece of luggage and one "personal" bag, many travellers need a sturdy consolidator for all the paraphernalia they think they'll need onboard. The **TUMI Deluxe Expandable Messenger Bag** ($225) made of tough nylon, with a shoulder strap and detachable phone case, is eleven-by-sixteen inches and expands to eight-and-a-half inches of depth, making it perfect for stashing a purse, laptop, CD player, book, sandwich—whatever you normally have to juggle. While it doesn't expand, the Courier Collection Messenger Bag ($245), with similar dimensions but only six inches of depth, has sleeker lines and leather trim that makes more of a fashion statement (212-447-8747; www.tumi.com). *–N.H.*

Divers head for peerless sites in The Cayman Islands, notably Bloody Bay Wall off Little Cayman. About seventy-five miles from Grand Cayman, Little Cayman has, along with large colonies of booby and frigate birds, less than two hundred human residents. A fortunate few are being afforded an opportunity to move in temporarily to the recently opened Club at Little Cayman. Billed as a "luxury resort dedicated to diving," it has eight lavishly appointed units that are sold as time-shares or rented by the night. The Club also has a pool with two waterfalls, a spa, lush landscaping, and dual-purpose golf carts fitted with racks to hold scuba tanks. According to project director Mario Bodner, the desirable outpost offers "a real quiet" due to the presence of only one road on the ten-mile-long island and the scrupulous protection accorded the wildlife.

Those who prefer the greater liveliness of Grand Cayman, with its sparkling expanse of Seven Mile Beach, can rent a private villa through Cayman Villas. A brand-new indulgence along the beach is the seven-thousand-square-foot, Asian-styled Hibiscus day spa at the Westin Casuarina Resort, where the treatments can be as luscious as a papaya-pineapple body polish.

When something starts out perfect—like Elbow Beach on Bermuda, with its superfine pink sand and translucent water—then maybe the best thing that can happen is

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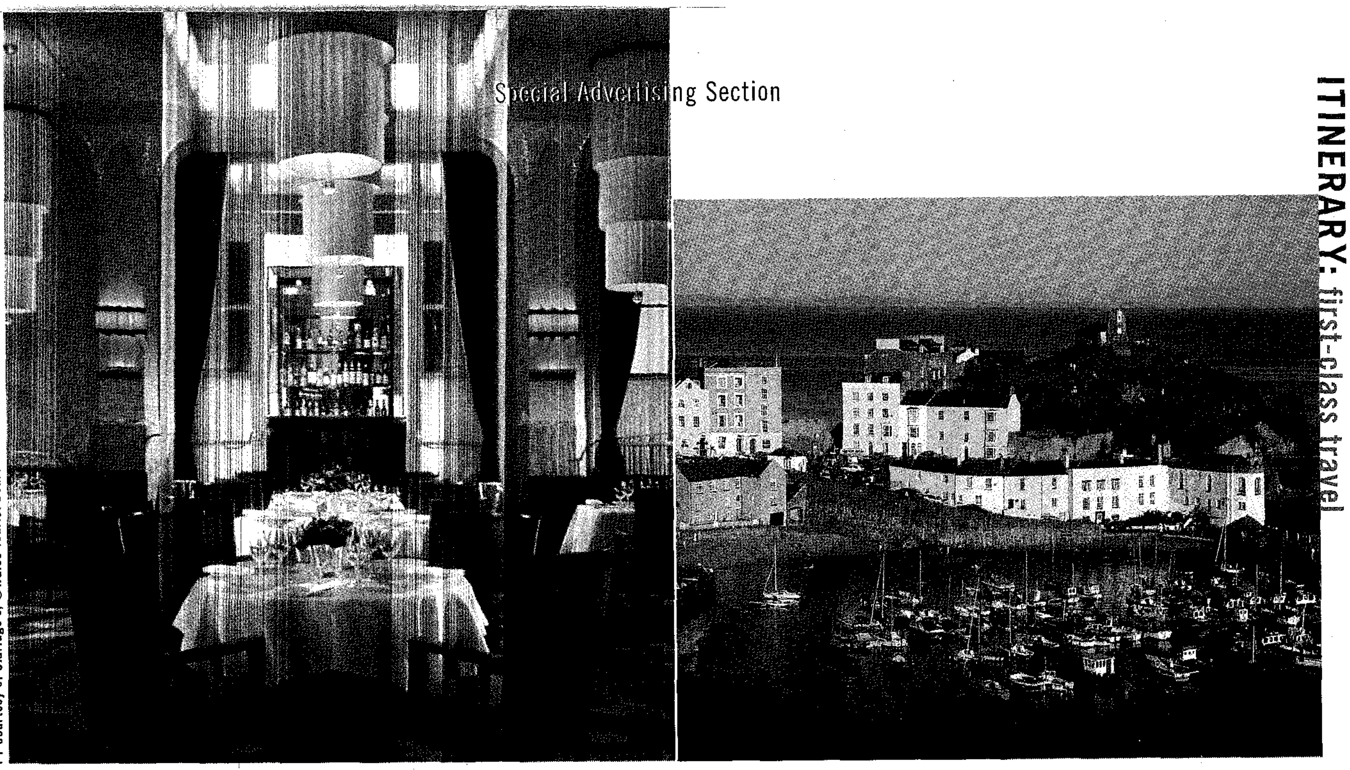

l-r courtesy of Claridge's, ©Wales Tourist Board

EXCLUSIVE AESTHETIC

Left: Chef Gordon Ramsay's new three-star restaurant at Claridge's. *Right:* The town of Tenby, along the scenic Pembrokeshire coast of South Wales.

absolutely nothing. It's the genius of Elbow Beach Resort to maintain an illusion of "time standing still" on its namesake stretch of paradise. Nothing but the sun and the water, sparkling forever, awaits. Built in 1908, the resort promotes elegance, with its main building and cottages set in fifty-five acres of opulent gardens. Yet what keeps it as fresh as a breeze stirring the coconut palms are the things that are constantly revived, such as the attentiveness of the service and the award-winning local cuisine at the Seahorse Grill.

FIT FOR ROYALTY

First class and royalty are two terms meant to mesh, and certainly they do this year in Great Britain, which is celebrating Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee. Much of the hoopla will occur June 1st through 4th, and the best accommodations may not be at Buckingham Palace but at the recently revitalized Claridge's. The hotel has something the palace lacks—a new Gordon Ramsay restaurant, ranking second only to the chef's three-star original. It's the hottest table in town. With the restoration of its streamlined and gorgeous Art Deco front hall, foyer, and reading room, Claridge's has regained an aesthetic equal to that of its fabled service. New and dramatic is the shimmering contemporary chandelier by Dale Chihuly. Old and riveting are the vintage photos taken out of storage to remind you that

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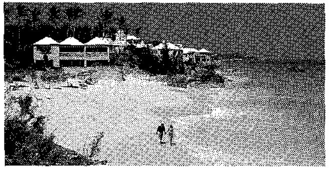

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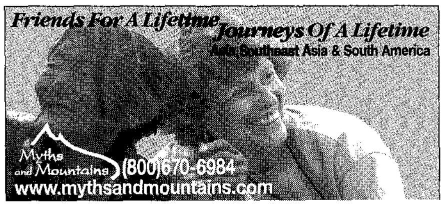

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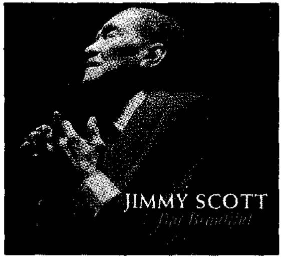
INSIDE INFORMATION

TRAVELLING MUSIC

Take advantage of inevitable airport downtime. Unpack the Discman, don the headphones, and make your own voyage soundtrack. Above all, listen deliberately. Spring arrives with a fresh crop of recommended recordings. Here's a sampling:

Sixties survivor **Neil Young** plugs in for the electric-reflective "Are You Passionate?" (Reprise), a Southern soul-rocking set featuring members of Booker T. & the MGs as the studio support team. • Also at ease in crossing stylistic borders, Brooklyn-based **Toshi Reagon** checks in with her strongest outing yet, "Toshi" (Razor & Tie), a lusty mix of rock, blues, folk, and gospel. • **Wilco** delivers a trippy headphone treat on "Yankee Hotel Foxtrot" (Nonesuch) where catchy pop melodies are layered with neopsychedelic sound collages. • Before Wilco, Jeff Tweedy co-led the seminal alternative-country band **Uncle Tupelo**. • Columbia/Legacy chronicles its early punk-meets-folk-meets-country history with "Uncle Tupelo 89/93: An Anthology." • **Jane Siberry** gets the retrospective treatment of her two-decade career with Rhino's two-CD "Love Is Everything" anthology, which sheds light on her nonformulaic pop songwriting approach. • Music omnivore **Elvis Costello** returns to his rock roots after seven years with the rousing "When I Was Cruel" (Island/Def Jam). He also makes a cameo vocal appearance on the **Mingus Big Band's** "Tonight at Noon..." (Dreyfus), a collection of evocative-to-boisterous love songs by jazz bassist icon Charles Mingus. • A national treasure, seventy-six-year-old jazz vocalist **Jimmy Scott**, a favorite of Billie Holiday, sings into the deep heart of standards on his latest, "But Beautiful" (Milestone), with his distinctive trembling vibrato, clipped phrasing, and sung-with-a-sad-smile pathos. • **Cassandra Wilson** wraps her dark-roast contralto around her own compositions and "new" standards on "Belly of the Sun" (Blue Note). She spins timeless jazz gold out of Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman." • **Kronos Quartet's** "Nuevo" (Nonesuch), a spirited classical-ethnic music album, explores the full spectrum of Mexican music—from *corrido* to Esquivel to *nortec*—through a string-quartet lens. Layered throughout is a sonic pastiche of found sounds from Mexico's street life.



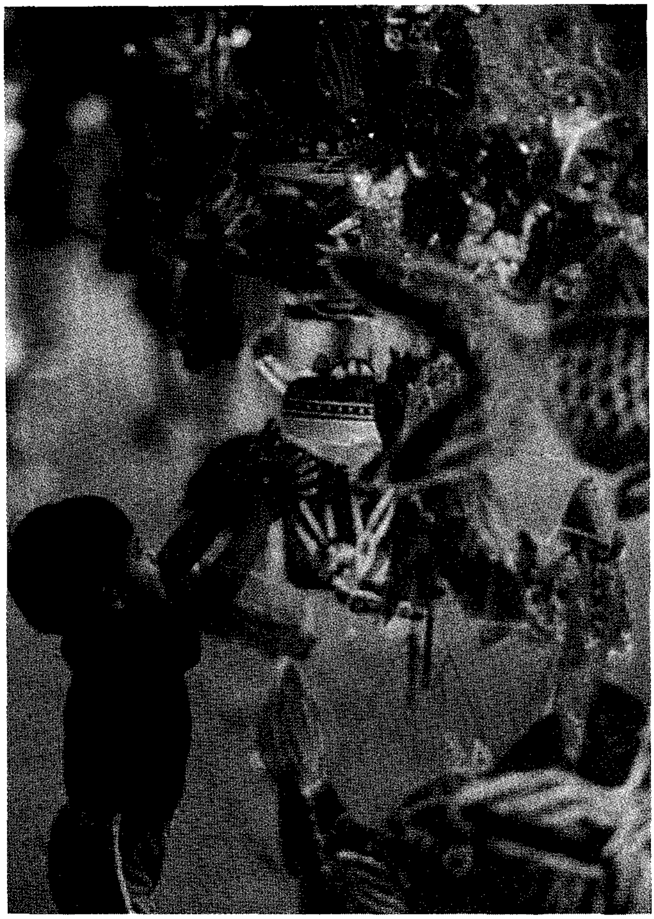
–Dan Ouellette

(Fit for Royalty continued)

guests here have included Winston Churchill, Jacqueline Onassis, and Elizabeth II as a newly crowned ingenue.

Those who would like to stay in a castle or a noble country house have many opportunities in Wales, which is crowned by a collection of forty-three varied and distinctive properties known as Welsh Rarebits. They include the many-splendored, seventeenth-century Bodysgallen Hall, with its magnificent gardens and swimming pool and spa. Among the five Rarebit members added in 2002 is Plas Dinas, an elegant home belonging to the Armstrong-Jones family, whose best-known member was Anthony, husband of Princess Margaret.

Golfers in Wales continue to bask in their recent triumph, The Celtic Manor, a large resort near Newport that has been selected as the site of the Ryder Cup 2010. But the announcement has hardly knocked Scotland off the golfing map. Those who



courtesy of Hong Kong Tourism Board

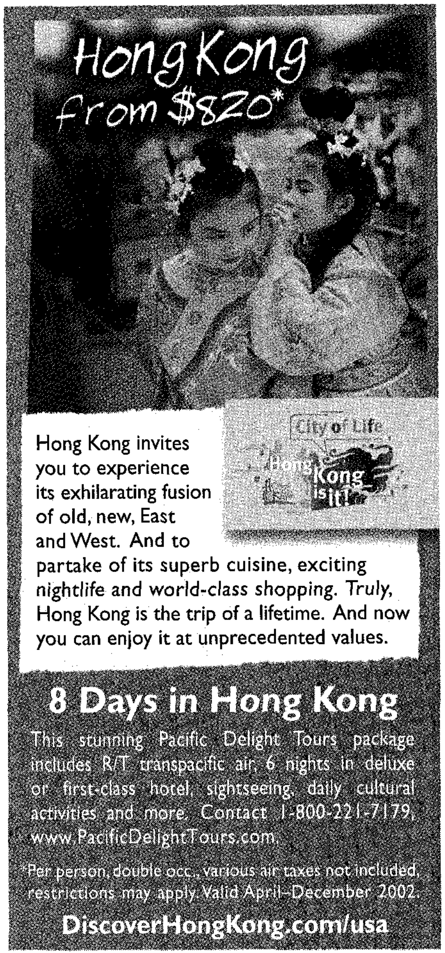
SHINE ON, HARVEST MOON

Decorative paper lanterns are part of Hong Kong's September mid-autumn festival, marking the harvest moon.

want to stay and play in style can rent a Scottish castle through Loyd & Townsend-Rose. Or they can book passage on the Royal Scotsman's specialty golf tour, May 20–24. Known as the world's most luxurious train, the Royal Scotsman combines transport for thirty-six passengers in lavishly appointed cars with fabulous meals, and sight-seeing stops at castles, distilleries, smokehouses, and other attractions—to say nothing of unparalleled views of shores and moors. The golf tour includes all this as well as detours to Gleneagles, Royal Durnock, and Nairn.

TOURS DE FORCE

"First class means access to expertise," says Cheryl Sturm of R. Crusoe & Son (888-490-8002; www.rcrusoe.com), extolling the virtues of the escorted tours she offers to small groups and clients such as the patrons of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. And that expertise, she emphasizes, includes contact with people who can really open up and expand the "experience" of a place. On tours of China, which are popular right now, travellers meet, for example, with a historian in Shanghai, as well as an archaeologist in Xian who explains the excavation and repair of the astonishing terra-cotta army of warriors, a collection more than two thousand years old. On tours of Indochina (also an increasingly attractive destination) they gain insights into the ancient temples



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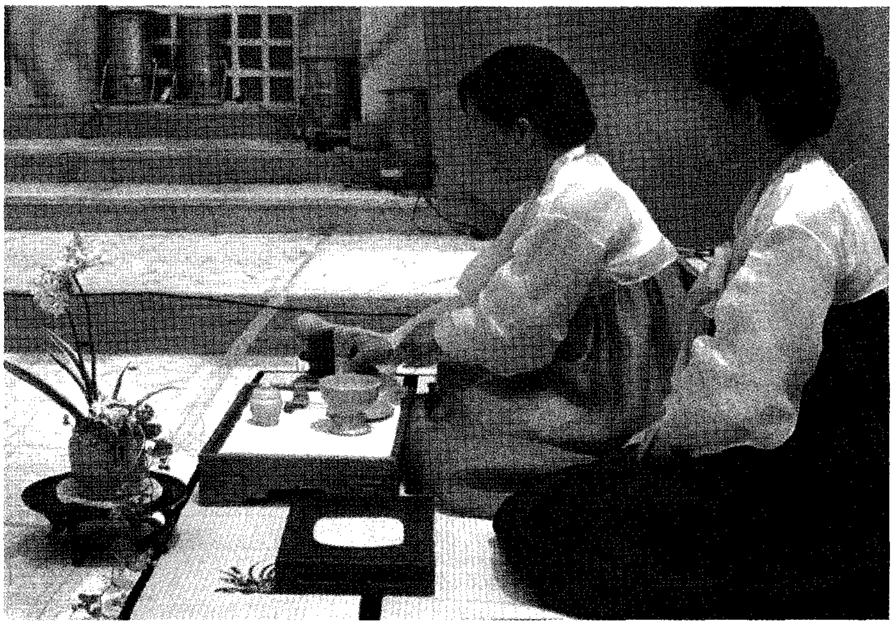
of Angkor in Cambodia during a private tour given by a representative of the World Monuments Fund. In Vientiane, they talk with American Carol Cassidy, who has revived the fine art of Laotian silk weaving.

All visitors can draw on local expertise in Hong Kong, thanks to the city's Meet the People program—a fascinating series of lectures and demonstrations offered daily to the public. Chinese antiques, feng shui, and tai chi chuan are only a few of the topics explored. The city also introduces itself at the new Hong Kong Museum of History, which traces the islands, in entertaining exhibits, from their geological origins four hundred million years ago through the cultures spawned by diverse inhabitants. It all contributes to an understanding of just how cosmopolitan Hong Kong is, with its peerless harbor views, hotels, and restaurants. The penultimate in luxe: a scenic ten-minute helicopter ride offered by the Peninsula hotel between the airport and its rooftop helipads. (The hotel also offers Rolls-Royce limo service to and from the airport.)


courtesy of KNTO

A CEREMONIAL PAUSE

Tea and harmony are central to social life in Korea.

Knowledge underscores the greatness of a place, and many visitors to Korea want to see past the modern business bustle of Seoul into the heart of the country's culture. Tours by Absolute Asia combine first-class accommodations with informed guides that elucidate the magnificent palaces of Seoul, Buddhist temples in the countryside, and landscapes of unforgettable beauty. A delicious itinerary is the weeklong "Cultural & Culinary Traditions of Korea," during which the country's superb cuisine is celebrated in lavish dinners and cooking classes, and there are also visits to a rich variety of landmarks.

What Julian Harrison brings to guided tours of South Africa is a deep love of his native land. The scenic beauty draws him back two or three times a year, and right now, with an extremely favorable exchange rate, South Africa, he says, is "probably one

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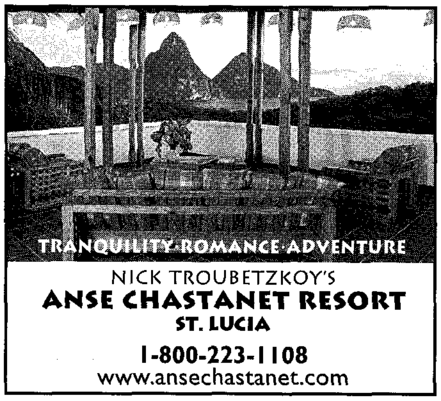
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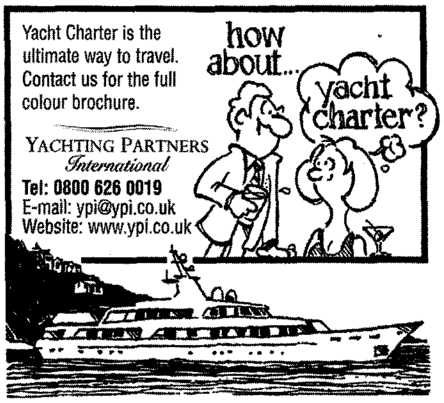
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Home From Home

of the best values anywhere." As president of Premier Tours in Philadelphia (800-545-1910; www.premiertours.com), Harrison plans tours that demonstrate his conviction that "South Africa has luxury to rival anywhere else in the world." A ten-day itinerary includes several days at the Cape Grace Hotel in Cape Town, one of the world's most beautiful harbor cities, with excursions into the winelands and to The Boulders, where a walk on the beach will be in the company of its resident penguins. Travel on the Blue Train where private butlers are part of the luxe tradition is also on the itinerary, as is the "mind-blowing lavishness" (as Harrison puts it) of the Palace of the Lost City at Sun City Resort in the northeast near Johannesburg. There are also several nights spent at the Singita Private Game Reserve, where every suite has a private plunge pool, the food is excellent, and the incomparable entertainment consists of twice-daily guided visits to the habitat of lions, elephants, buffalo, rhinos, and giraffes. Sound like a fantasy dream come true? The high rate of repeat business, Harrison notes, means that the promise of pleasure in South Africa is both realistic and realized.

(Nao Hauser is a New York freelance food and travel writer.)

INSIDE INFORMATION

CONNECTIONS

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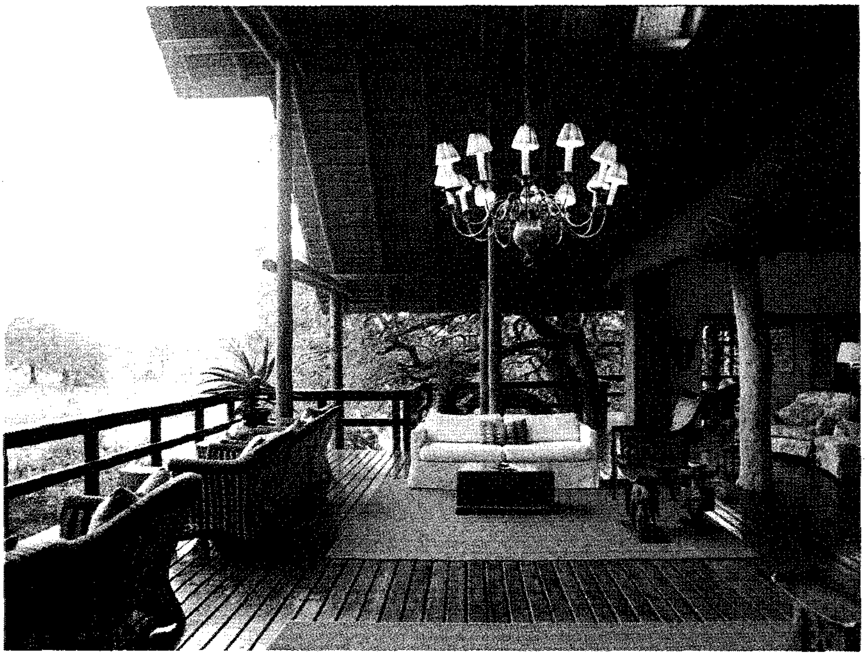
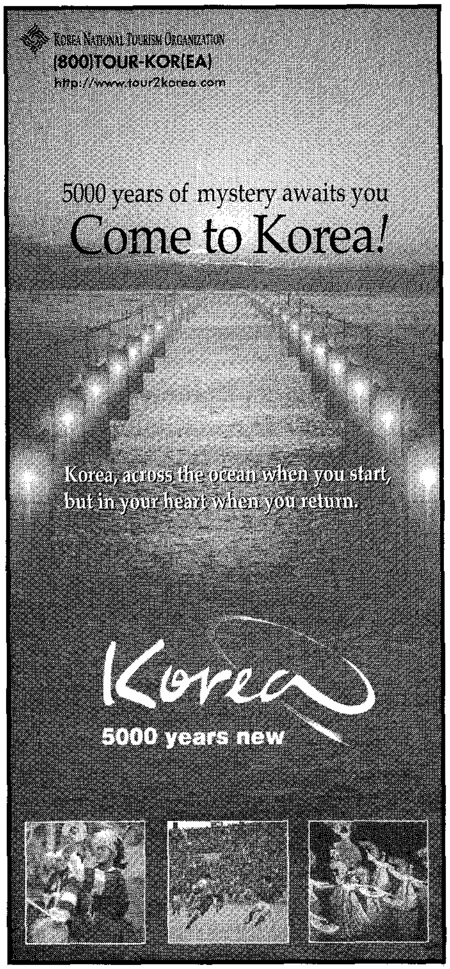


courtesy of Singita Private Game Reserve

ANIMAL HEAVEN

Luxurious decks at the Singita Private Game Reserve in South Africa afford sweeping views of the plains.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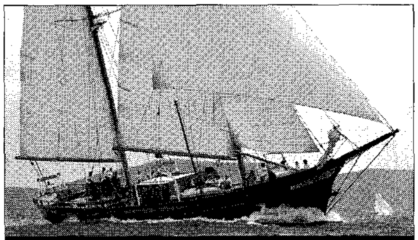

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NEWS BRIEFS

Luxury villas in Tuscany, Provence, and Capri are still available for August through **LaCURE**. Closer to home, the Toronto-based company has exquisite houses for rent in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. . . . The independent business traveller can rent a house or flat in London and host clients with catered cocktail and dinner parties. **Home from Home** has rentals in prime locales like Knightsbridge and Notting Hill. . . . On Memorial Day, **The Horned Dorset Primavera** in Puerto Rico will unveil twenty-two sea-view villas with marble floors, colonial teak furnishings, and private plunge pools. . . . **Arctic Odysseys'** fall Polar bear excursion to Churchill, Manitoba (November 4–9) will accommodate guests in a remote four-star lodge where cookbook author Helen Weber supervises menus that might include such specialties as marinated caribou, pepper-stuffed wild goose, and cloudberry pie. . . . Newly refitted yachts for summer Mediterranean charter from **Yachting Partners International**: the J-class sloop Shamrock V, a former America's Cup contender, and the 150-foot motorboat, Ragazza. . . . Scheduled throughout the year, **Stay & Visit Italy's** Tuscany-Umbria-Rome tour sojourns in the medieval village of Gubbio. Guests will board at the Hotel Relais Ducale, a converted fifteenth-century palace, and dine at the world-class Taverna del Lupo, which specializes in regional dishes. . . . Unwind with one-hour massages for two upon arrival at **Anse Chastanet** in St. Lucia. Committed to the philosophy that utter seclusion is the ultimate luxury, the resort's rooms come sans telephones, televisions, and radios. . . . **China Private Tours** caters to its clientele's first-class appetites with five-star hotels and escorted excursions to the Peking Opera and the newly reopened Shanghai Museum of Art . . . **The Buckingham Hotel** in New York prints in-residence business cards for guests who stay for a month or more of work-related activities in Gotham. . . . **Port Yacht Charters** takes to the Caribbean with its customized sailing itineraries on floating "resorts" staffed by expert crews. Each charter includes a professional chef who cooks gourmet meals to guests' specifications. . . . Trendy boutique hotel **Number Sixteen** in London secures reservations for its guests at upscale restaurants like Embassy where they can savor chef Gary Hollihead's first-class cuisine. Tickets for the West End's hottest shows are also secured through the reception desk staff. . . . Four-star hotels are reserved for **Cross-Culture's** Jewels of the Baltic Sea tour (August 25–September 5). The enterprising tour guide will procure tickets for concerts in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Riga, Latvia. . . . **Caravella Italia** customizes its small group tours to Italy. A sampling of its unique opportunities: an after-hours visit to the Sistine Chapel and a private boat crossing to Capri from the Amalfi Coast. . . . Brainstorm with business associates in the Dominican Republic at **Karisma Villas Del Mar**, where 24/7 business concierge services are available. . . . At the poolside happy hour at **Eden House** in Key West, the staff recommends the best bets in town (like the homemade fries at B.O.'s Fish Wagon or the chocolate-covered pie bars at Key West Key Lime Pie Company). And for parents who need some downtime, the inn has a child clinician (read: babysitter). . . . Every penthouse suite at **Poipu Kapili** in Kauai features a private lanai with sea and mountain views—the perfect place for a candlelit dinner of seared *ahi* (tuna) or *opakapaka* (snapper) with mango salsa, baked taro, and a macadamia nut torte. . . . **Ring-Andersen**, a freighter converted into a private luxury yacht available for summer charter along the New England coast, offers elegant accommodations for six. Culinary delights are prepared by award-winning chef Greg Atkinson. . . . Visit southern Africa from South Africa to Namibia to the Okavango Delta on a luxury air safari with **Ker & Downey**, which accommodates its guests with the top-of-the-line lodging on its October 12th and November 9th departures. . . . When you rent a luxe Italian countryside home from **Tuscany Now**, it will arrange the rest—chauffeur, security, private flights, car rentals. The Torre Palazzone and La Rocca homes include staff and cooks. . . . Golf outings, spa services, and

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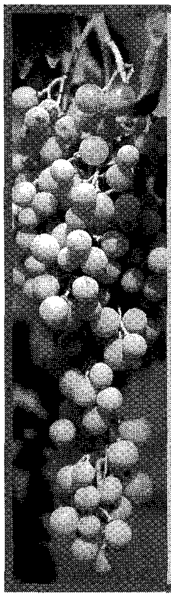

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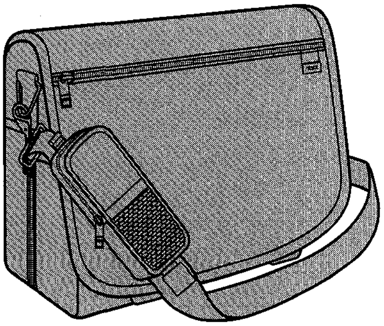
in-room bubbly at **Pink Beach Club** in Bermuda can be arranged in advance through the on-line concierge services of its revamped Web site. . . . Casa Laura in Oaxaca, Mexico serves as a home base for **Weekend en español's** Spanish immersion program. The villa is distinguished by its "mi casa es su casa" service. . . . This year's featured trip for **Senior Women's Travel** is its new Greece tour (June 3–13 and September 23–October 3) of three islands—Mykonos, Naxos, Delos—Thessaloniki, and Athens, which is already preparing for the 2004 Olympics. . . . Charter your own private luxury yacht with an expert naturalist on **Myths and Mountains'** tour of the Gálapagos archipelago. . . . **East Travel** fashions personalized tours for authentic China experiences. Amenities include private drivers and elegant hotels where special concierge service can be arranged. . . . Owned by a Hollywood studio head, the exclusive Castello di Giove in the Umbria region is one of many full-service villas in Italy rented by **The Parker Company**. While there, take advantage of an **Actividayz** one-day outing such as a wine-tasting visit to Salvatore's Wine Cellar or a lesson in preparing Umbrian stuffed duck the old-fashioned way. . . . **Geographic Expeditions'** private mobile safaris in Tanzania, Kenya, and Botswana feature luxury tents with verandas, and comfy beds with feather pillows and duvets. Fine cuisine includes fresh-baked bread and homemade pasta. . . . **TravLtips** offers special clipper ship rates for a transatlantic cruise on the elite, 228-passenger Royal Clipper, embarking on October 12th. . . . Hotel updates in **Sarasota**, Florida: The new Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota will expand its fitness center this fall with a full-service spa, and the Radisson Lido Beach Resort is currently building a twelve-story beachfront tower that will comprise a hundred and twelve deluxe rooms and suites. . . . **California Native** enhances its Copper Canyon, Mexico trip with a four-night stay at a five-star Baja beach resort. *–D.O.*



CARRY ON.

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1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.
2. All contestants must be 18 years of age or older and a legal U.S. resident as of the date of entry.
3. Contestants may submit one (1) entry per household. All entries must be received by July 22, 2002. All submitted entries become the property of The Condé Nast Publications and will not be acknowledged or returned.
4. Contestants may enter the sweepstakes by completing and submitting the business reply card in the "Itinerary: First-Class Travel" section of the April 22, 2002 issue of *The New Yorker or* by sending a 3"x5" postcard with name and address to *The New Yorker* Merchandising Department, 4 Times Square, 21st Floor, New York, NY 10036. Entries that are lost, late, damaged, misdirected, garbled, or incompletely received, for any reason, will not be eligible. Mechanically reproduced entries not eligible.
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9. Acceptance of prize constitutes consent to use winner's name and likeness for editorial, advertising, and publicity purposes without further compensation, except where prohibited. The winner may be required to sign an Affidavit of Eligibility and a Liability/Publicity release within ten days of date of attempted notification or an alternate winner may be chosen.
10. For name of winner, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the "Itinerary: First-Class Travel" Great Giveaways Sweepstakes Winner, *The New Yorker* Merchandising Department, 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036 after July 29, 2002.

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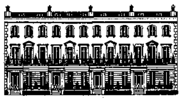

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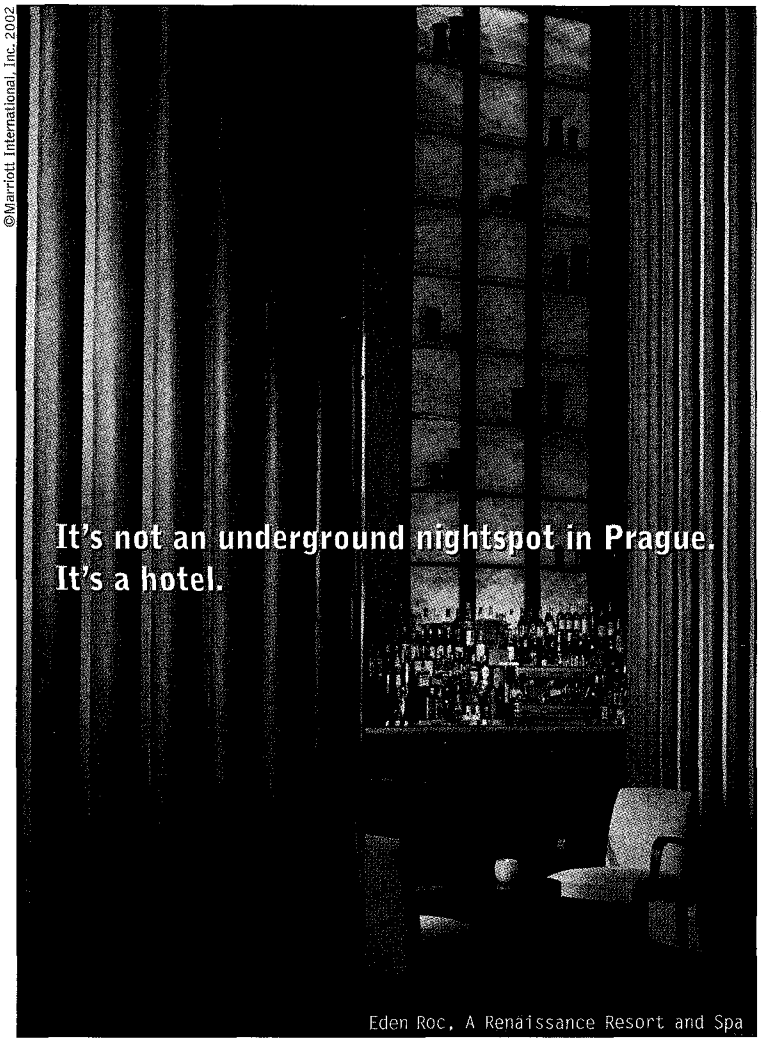
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LOWEST EBB • STEPHEN KING

CONE HEAD

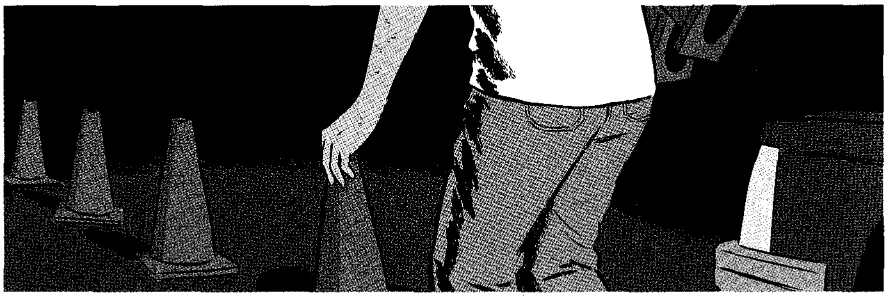
In the spring of 1970, when I was twenty-two, I was arrested by the Orono, Maine, police. After a traffic stop, I'd been discovered in possession of some three dozen rubber traffic cones. After a hard night of drinking Long Island Iced Tea at the University Motor Inn, I had struck one of these traffic cones while driving home. It bounced up under the car and tore off the muffler of my ancient Ford station wagon. I had noticed earlier that the town of Orono had been painting crosswalks that day, and now realized they'd left their damn traffic cones all over the place. With a drunk's logic, I decided to cruise around town—slowly, safely, sanely—and pick up all the cones. Every single one. The following day, I would present them, along with my dead muffler, at the Town Office in a display of righteous anger.

The Orono police, who already had reasons to dislike me (I was a notorious anti-Vietnam War "hippie"), were delighted with their catch. The arresting officer found enough cones in the back of my station wagon to elevate the bust into the category of larceny. Only I knew that I'd actually been caught on my second cone run. Had I been caught with the hundred or so already stashed in my apartment building, perhaps we would have been talking grand larceny.

Months passed. I graduated from the University of Maine. With a potential larceny conviction hanging over my head, I looked for a teaching job. But jobs were scarce, and what I got instead was a gig pumping go-juice near the town of Brewer. My boss was a woman. I don't remember her name, but we'll call her Ellen. Ellen didn't know I had a trial for larceny in my future. For the minimum wage she was paying me (I think it was a dollar-sixty an hour), I didn't feel she was entitled to know.

There was a price war going on at the time, and we at Interstate 95 Gas were selling regular at twenty-nine cents a gallon. But wait, folks, there's more. With a fill-up, you got your choice of the Glass (an ugly but durable diner-style water tumbler) or the Bread (an extra-long loaf of spongy white). If we forgot to ask if we could check your oil, you got your fill-up free. If we forgot to say thank you, same deal. And guess who would have to pay for the free fill-up? That's right, the forgetful pump jockey, who, in my case, was half past broke already; dinner in those days often consisted of Cheerios fried in lard with a cigarette chaser.

I had by then met Tabitha Spruce, of Old Town, and asked her to marry me. She had agreed, contingent upon my finding a slightly better job than pumping off-brand gasoline. I could understand that. Who wants to marry a guy whose largest responsibility is asking customers whether they prefer the Glass or the Bread?



ADRIAN TOMINE

Comes August of 1970, and my trial for cone theft. I tell Ellen I won't be able to make it to work that afternoon because a relative of my fiancée has died ("fiancée" sounds so much more responsible than "girlfriend") and I have to take her to the funeral. Ellen appears to buy this. And indeed there is a funeral of sorts, but it turns out to be mine. I serve as my own lawyer in Bangor District Court, but have a fool for a client. I am found guilty. Yet it could be worse; I am fined only a hundred dollars. I could have been put in the county jail for six months. Furthermore, I've just sold a horror story, "The Float," to a girlie mag called *Adam*. The check comes just in time to pay my fine.

The following day, when I arrive at work, Ellen is smiling a smile that tells me the elevator of bad fortune has not quite finished descending. She tells me she wasn't aware that funerals were held in Bangor District Court. It turns out that a relative of Ellen's—a cousin, nephew, something like that—was next on the docket following the disposition of my case. In one of those fantastic pranks of bad luck that seem to occur only when you're on a complete roll, this miscreant, who knew me by sight from the gas station, had mentioned seeing me.

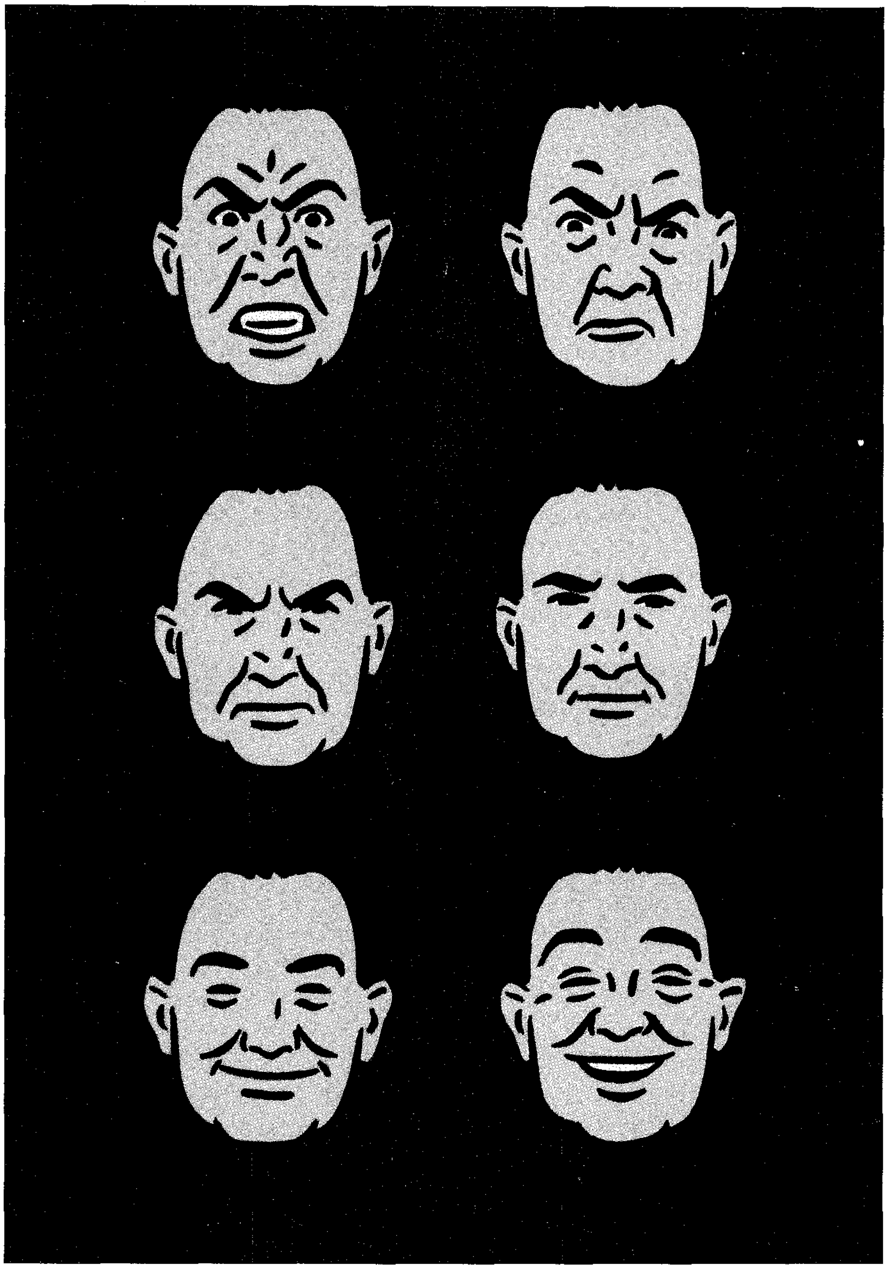
And that is how I found myself unemployed and with a criminal record a month shy of my twenty-third birthday. I began wondering if I was going to turn out to be a Really Bad Person. Being a Really Bad Person is a shitty job, but somebody has to do it, I reasoned. Perhaps stealing traffic cones was only my first step downward. I think that was the summer I realized that we are really not all stars of our own show, and that happy endings—even happy middles, for God's sake—are absolutely in doubt. ♦

DEPT. OF COACHING

THE BETTER BOSS

How Marshall Goldsmith reforms executives.

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR



Why should companies lose talented employees just because a manager is abrasive?

Marshall Goldsmith is a happy man. He started out happy, he worked on his happiness, and now, at the age of fifty-three, he is very happy. He is, in fact, a happiness professional.

His official job description is "executive coach": he trains executives to behave decently in the office, by subjecting them to a brutal regimen. First, he solicits "360° feedback"—he asks their colleagues and sometimes their families, too, for comprehensive assessments of their strengths and defects—and he confronts them with what everybody really thinks. Then he makes them apologize and ask for help in getting better. It's a simple method—"I don't think anybody's going to say I'm guilty of excessive subtlety," he says—but it works. It had better work. If it doesn't, the client gets his money back.

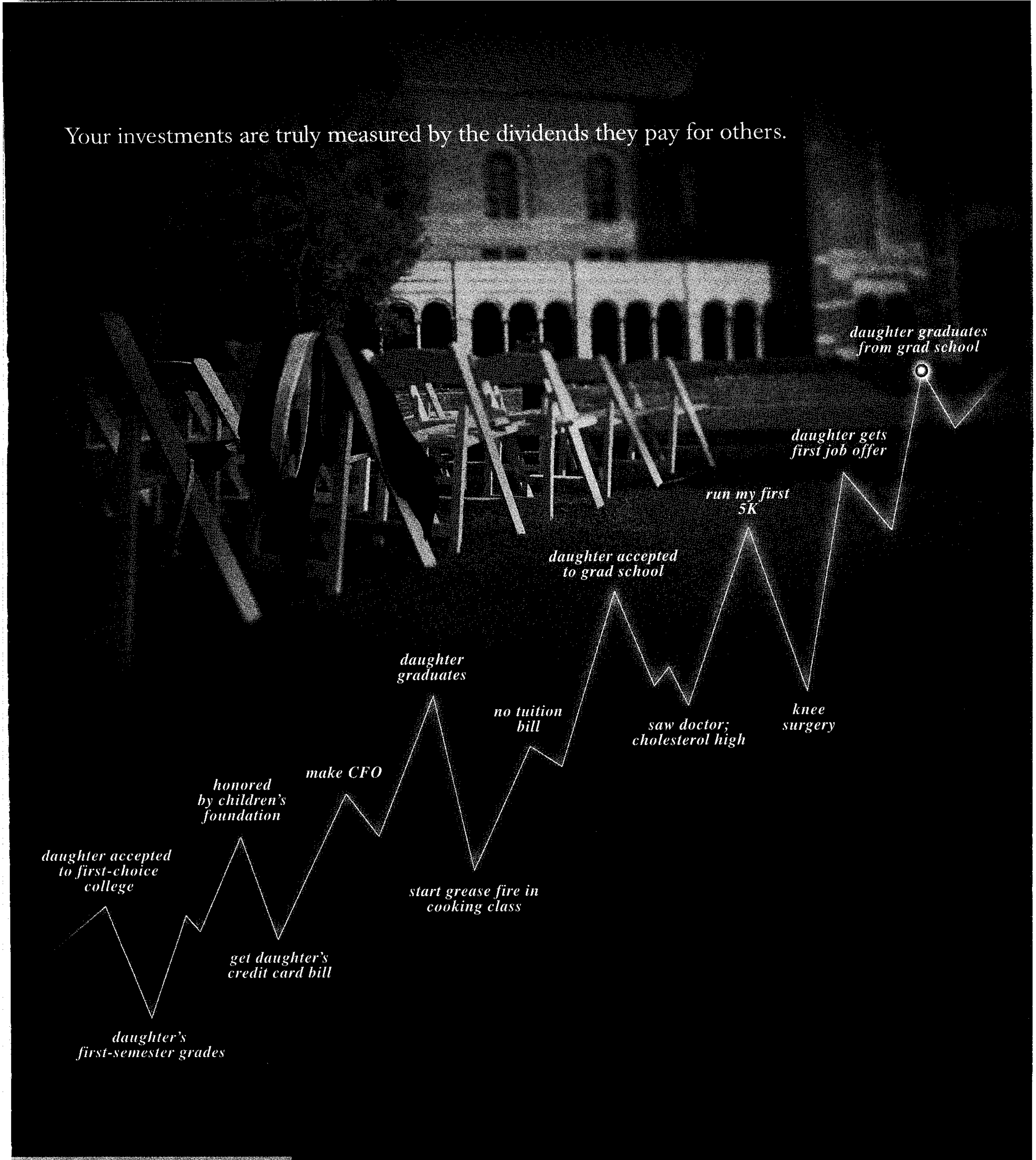
Goldsmith is so extraordinarily buoyant and extroverted (he scored a perfect E on his Myers-Briggs personality test) that he seems to enter a room in a tinkle of magic dust. If he were shorter (he is nearly six feet), he would look like a leprechaun. His head is round and pink and bald, his eyes are blue, and his chin juts out and upward to meet his nose, like the chin of a wooden puppet. He skips more than walks, and when he is in a bouncy mood (which he usually is) he dances along with his arms straight out and swinging. When he laughs (which he does often), he sounds like a goose. He wears the same outfit every day: green polo shirt, khakis, and moccasins. His favorite movie is "The Wizard of Oz," and his favorite song is "Over the Rainbow." He ends his e-mails and his conversations with what has become his signature phrase: "Life is good!"

The leprechaun quality is one of the reasons Goldsmith is successful. It is a rare executive, after all, who welcomes a man sent by his boss to reform his personality. But people who have worked with Goldsmith call him "disarming," and say that he seems so happy with his life that when he says he is not judging them personally they believe him.

Goldsmith won't take on a client who doesn't want to change—someone who, as he puts it, has not a skill problem but a don't-give-a-shit problem—but, short of that, the more obnoxious the better. "My favorite case study was in the 0.1 percentile for treating people with respect," he says. "That means that there were over a thousand people in that company and this person came in dead last. This person would be in an elevator and someone would come up and say, 'Hey, how's it going?,' and he wouldn't even respond. He was hardworking and brilliant; he didn't lie, cheat, or steal. He was just a complete jerk. The case was considered hopeless, but in one year he got up to 53.7 per cent.

"You know how I helped the guy to change? I asked him, 'How do you treat people at home?' He said, 'Oh, I'm totally different at home.' I said, 'Let's call your wife and kids.' What did his wife

FLOCH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say? 'You're a jerk.' Called the kids. 'Jerk.' 'Jerk.' So I said, 'Look, I can't help you make money, you're already making more than God, but do you want to have a funeral that no one attends? Because that's where this train is headed."

When Goldsmith started executive coaching, in the early eighties, he was a pioneer. Coaching really came into its own as an industry about five or six years ago, when employee retention became a serious problem. Prosperous baby boomers were retiring early, and members of Generation X were looking for variety and fulfillment rather than security. Human-resources departments, meanwhile, were calculating the cost of losing an important employee (between one and two times the employee's annual salary and benefits, according to one estimate), and had discovered that one of the two main reasons that people left jobs was that they hated their boss (the other being the general failure of the company). Clearly, it was foolish to lose talent for no better reason than that a vice-president appeared to his subordinates to be insufficiently interested in what they had to say. Moreover, a bad attitude on the part of senior management was held to be detrimental not only to retaining employees but also to the formation of strategy. The old-fashioned leader, with his bulldozer personality and his single-minded certainties, was thought to be too arrogant to lower his ear to the ground and listen for changes coming. Thus, the executive coach.

Coaching being still in its chaotic, juvenile phase, there are, as yet, no licensing requirements of any kind. Anyone can call himself an executive coach, and thousands do. Schools are springing up everywhere: Coach Universe and Coach U conduct classes by phone; CoachVille.com trains coaches for a seventy-nine-dollar lifetime-membership fee. For this reason, first-to-market coaches like Goldsmith, who already have solid reputations and have received notices in the business press (he was listed as one of five top coaches by *Forbes*, and in the top ten by the *Wall Street Journal*), are flourishing. Goldsmith's current clients include Chevron-Texaco, Motorola, Thomson, and Pitney Bowes. Some executives remain suspicious of coaching, thinking of it as a reproach or as enforced psychotherapy, but more often these days the offer of a coach is taken as a compliment—a sign, since the service is expensive, that a person is being groomed for significant promotion.

One of Goldsmith's clients is an executive in a large corporation. He is high-ranking—only a step or two from the top. None of Goldsmith's clients are far from the top—his services are too expensive to waste on mid-level managers. (He won't say how much he charges, but it is reported to be in the high five figures per client per year, which makes him one of the best-paid coaches in the field.) On a recent visit to the executive's office, Goldsmith ran into his client in the hallway, where the two of them were spotted by a little white-haired man wearing a red bow tie.

"Who's getting their head shrunk today?" asked the white-haired man in a jovial tone. The executive gave him a pained smile.

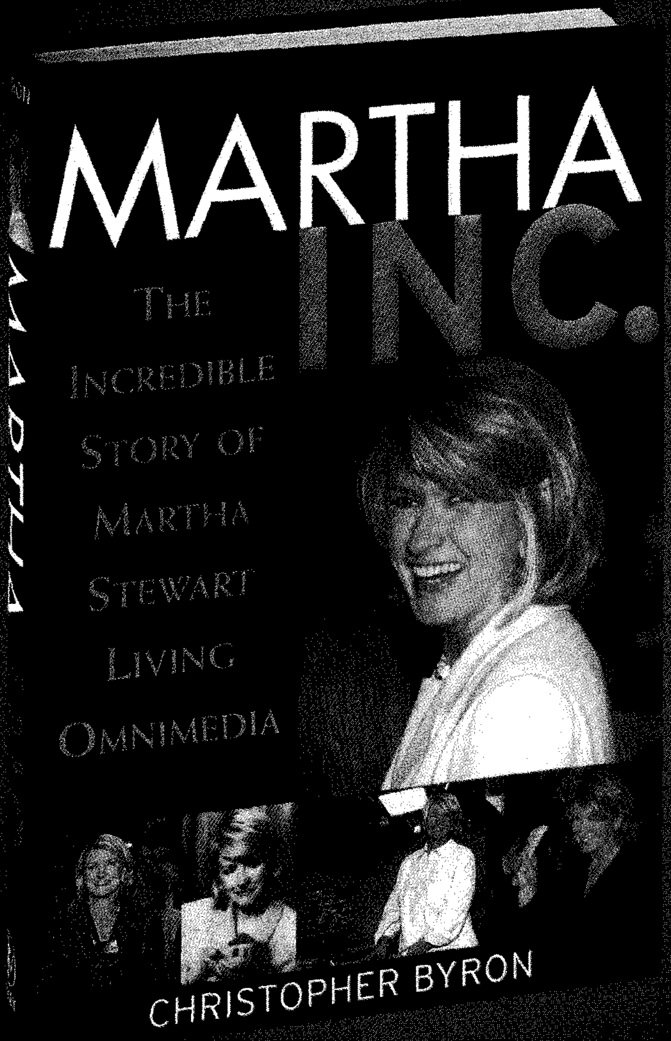
The executive was in his early forties and wore an open-necked white shirt. He had the genial, Saturday air of a man with a beer, making a seamless transition from fraternity to barbecue—an air that, by all accounts, had served him well in his work. But, at the same time, there was a tense wariness about him. The people in marketing who worked under him thought he was terrific, but his peers were tired of what they felt were his incessant competitive put-downs, and people in sales felt that he had failed, as Goldsmith primly put it, to treat them like customers. The executive had to stop being so territorial, the C.E.O. decided. Goldsmith was called in and signed up for a year.

Among the first things Goldsmith had taught the executive was to look only to the future, because, whatever he had done to make people angry, he couldn't fix it now. "Don't ask for feedback about the past," he says. Goldsmith has turned against the notion of feedback lately. He has written an article on a more positive methodology, which he calls "feedforward." "How many of us have wasted much of our lives impressing our spouse, partner, or significant other with our near-photographic memory of their previous sins, which we document and share to help them improve?" he says. "Dysfunctional! Say, 'I can't change the past—all I can say is I'm sorry for what I did wrong.' Ask for suggestions for the future. Don't promise to do everything they suggest—leadership is not a popularity contest. But follow up on a regular basis, and you know what's going to happen? You will get better."

"Let's start with the salespeople," Goldsmith said, when he and the executive had settled in. The executive wasn't quite senior enough to have his own conference area, so he and Goldsmith sat in an empty room near his office at a large, round table. "Let's do a little role-

Victoria Roberts

"He's heterosexual, but he works out as much as a homosexual."



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play. I’m them, you’re you. Hey there! Whaddaya wanna talk about?”

“Well, as you know, I’m working with Marshall Goldsmith on how to get better,” the executive began. “First of all, let me thank you for your time.”

Goldsmith instructs his coaching clients to recite this speech, and, because they tend to be the type of people who like to get things exactly right, most of them recite it more or less verbatim. It incorporates several core Goldsmith principles: the apology; the rejection of excuses; and the declaration of dependence on other people’s help.

“I received a lot of great feedback from you and others,” the executive continued. “I’m seen as someone who is personable, gets things done, bright, with a good business sense, and those are things I want to continue leveraging. I also seem too focussed on what my division needs to do and not enough on the big picture, I need to listen more, and I need to come to you guys in sales when I have problems. I’ve heard about a couple of instances where I didn’t do that; frankly, I know better, and there are no excuses. What I’d like to do now is ask for your help in the future, because I’m really anxious to improve my relationship with the sales force.”

The brilliance of this speech is that it makes the colleagues realize that all the power—over the client, and thus also over Goldsmith’s payment—is in their hands. This is the classic Goldsmith move. It has its origins in an experience he had when he was twenty-eight and in New York for the evening and took himself to Le Périgord. He confessed to the waiter that he had never eaten in a place this fancy before, that he had a hundred dollars, tip included, to spend on the meal, and would the waiter please bring him the best hundred-dollar meal he could come up with. The waiter, he believes, brought him a meal worth at least a hundred and fifty dollars, and treated him like a king. This inspired in Goldsmith two articles of faith: one, a nearly religious belief in the value of expertise; and, two, a conviction that, if you put all your cards in someone else’s hands, he will treat you better than if you kept the cards for yourself.

“Perfect!” Goldsmith said. “Now, what did you learn?”

“I learned that they gave me a lot of credit for coming to see them, more than you could ever imagine. They loved it, actually. It was so simple.”

Goldsmith had instructed the executive that, when talking to the salespeople, he was to sit down, shut up, and listen. He was not to comment on anything they said, even with a compliment. “Do not critique other people’s ideas, even in a positive way,” he tells his clients. “Suppose I ask you for three ideas. The first one, I say, ‘Gee, that’s a great idea.’ Second one, ‘Well, that’s a good idea.’ Third one, I say nothing. What message did I just send you? A, C, F. Am I listening to your ideas or am I grading them?”

Goldsmith had also taught the executive one of his rules for the receiving of ideas in general: never start a sentence with the word “no,” “but,” or “however.” This is a rule that, in recalcitrant cases, he has taken to reinforcing by imposing cash fines (the money goes to charity). “One guy I was coaching, his problem was, he was stubborn,” he says. “We were going over his feedback, and he said, ‘But Marshall.’ I said, ‘O.K., that’s free, but if you ever again begin a sentence with ‘no,’ ‘but,’ or ‘however’ I’m going to fine you twenty bucks.’ He said, ‘But Marshall.’ I said, ‘Twenty.’ He said, ‘No.’ I said, ‘Forty.’ He said, ‘No no no.’ I said, ‘Sixty, eighty, a hundred.’ He lost four hundred and twenty dollars in an hour and a half. Well, he got real pissed off at me after about twenty minutes and said, ‘Marshall, you’re an asshole.’ I said, ‘Yes, no doubt I am an asshole, but you’re not paying me to fix me.’ You know what he said at the end of the hour and a half? Thank you.”

“Well, that’s a winner!” Goldsmith said to the executive, when he had finished recounting his reaching-out experience. “What else?”

“Don’t become soft,” the executive said. “A guy who’s been around here forever said, ‘I’ve seen guys like you get feedback that you’re a little rough and you become pussycats.’ ”

“There you go!” said Goldsmith, somewhat taken aback by this unusual caveat but delighted by any new information. He noticed the executive glancing at his watch. “You gotta go?” he asked.

“I gotta go.”

“Get outta here.”

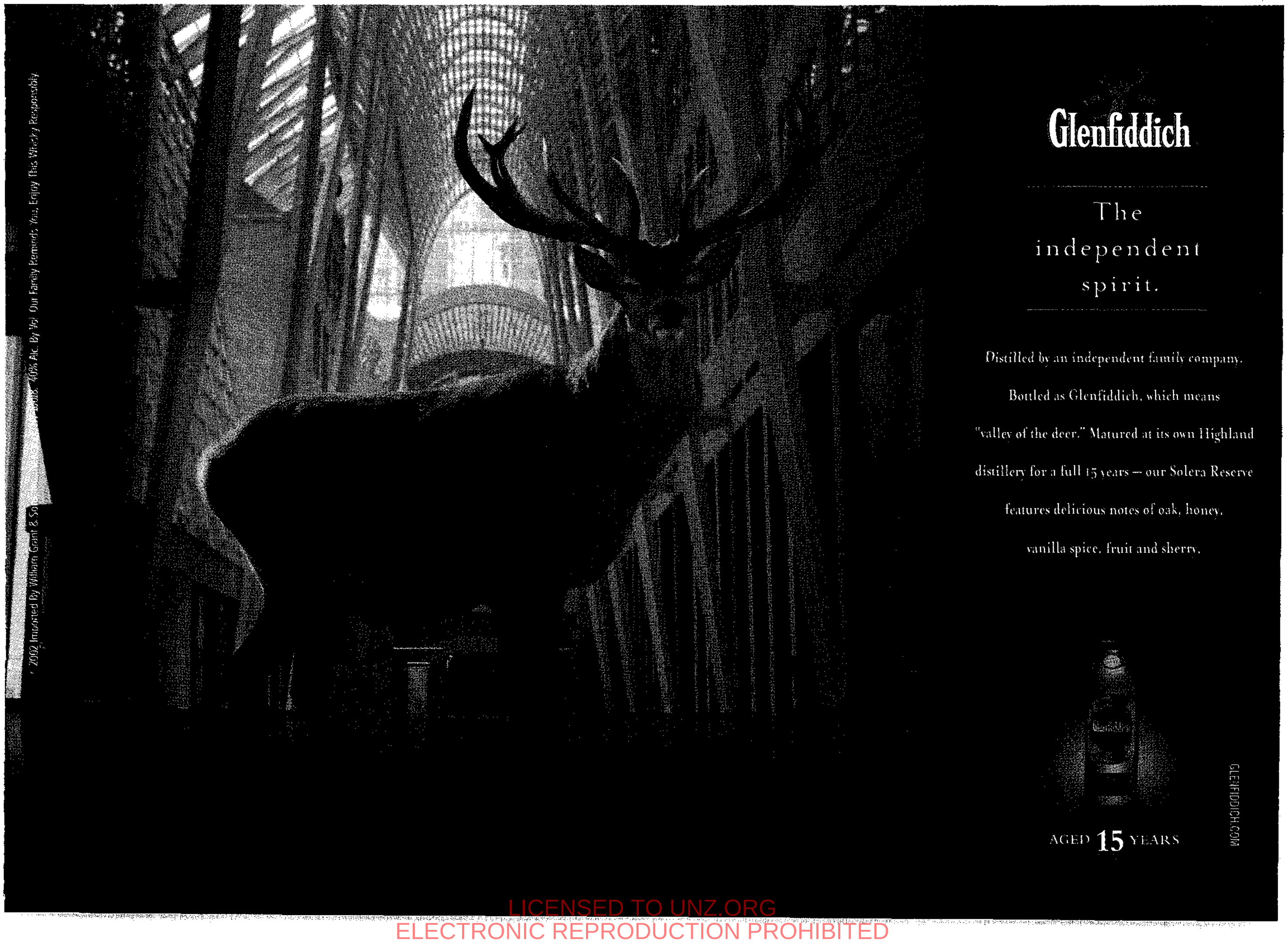
Beginning with this executive, Goldsmith had decided to make one key change in his usual method. He was going to spend far more time than he usually did talking to the executive's colleagues. Coaching, he had recently realized, was not, ultimately, about changing his client's behavior so much as changing *perceptions* of the client's behavior. He had observed that his clients had to change a hundred per cent to get ten per cent credit, partly because people could be ungenerous, but mostly because they simply didn't notice. And in leadership, as he liked to say, it doesn't matter what you say—only what they hear. He had determined therefore that the solution to this problem was to make doubly sure that he got those colleagues' attention. In Goldsmith's opinion, the development of a better reputation was akin to the development of better muscle tone—not conceptually complicated, just a matter of applying oneself and getting on with it.

If you ask Goldsmith to describe the principles of his happiness, he will say that they are best summed up by Buddhism. Goldsmith has been a Buddhist since his mid-twenties, and now he likes to think of himself as a kind of Buddhist monk, spreading the good news. He describes his version of Buddhism as a branch of Zen, most closely approximated by his favorite author, a Vietnamese monk who lives in France. It can be summed up, he says, in three words: Be happy now.

"The great Western disease is 'I'll be happy when,' " he says. "This is a much deeper concept than most people grasp: it's not just 'I'll be happy when I make a million dollars'; it's 'I'll be happy when I scratch my head.' Western Buddhists often substitute 'I'll be happy when I get less' for 'I'll be happy when I get more,' which I think is even stupider. You want less? Give it away! That's not hard. But you can't be happy by having less, and you can't be happy by having more. You can only be happy with what you have." (This is, incidentally, the philosophy that guides Goldsmith's investments: he has put all his money in bonds, reasoning that the possibility of increasing his wealth in the stock market isn't worth the trouble of worrying about it.)

When it comes to being happy now, Goldsmith has proved that he can walk the walk in the most extreme conditions. He has twice thought he was going to die in a plane wreck. The first time, he was in a small plane flying to Santa Barbara when the landing gear jammed; the pilot had to circle the airport until he ran low on fuel so that the plane wouldn't burst into flames when it crashed. "You know what my reflection about life was?" Goldsmith says. "I didn't thank enough people. Guess what I did when we landed? Thanked everybody. The second time it happened, I was flying from Rochester to Chicago, and we had to take our shoes off and get down in the crash position and the flight attendants were all bawling, which was not real encouraging, and that's how I found out I'd made peace with dying. I thought, Hey, I've had a good life. I die? I die. Shit happens. And I already thanked everybody."

Buddhism is also the underpinning for Goldsmith's third-favorite saying,



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And when at last the road
gives out I'll walk—
bitter grass, sea-maws,
naked lichened bedrock—

and hole up the cold
summer in some battered
caravan, quartering
the brittle waves

till my eyes evaporate,
and I'm willing again
to deal myself in,
having watched them

breach, breathe, and dive
far out in the glare,
like stitches sewn in a rent
almost beyond repair.

—*Kathleen Jamie*

after "Life is good" and "Be happy now": "Let it go." "Most Western religions glorify guilt," he says. "I've done all kinds of bad things I could dredge up. We all have. So what? What's the value-added for me to feel miserable? It's done now, I can't change it." It's not that it doesn't matter what you do—it's just that it only matters what you do *now.* Gone is the practice of adding up good deeds and bad to arrive at an assessment of moral character, because character, in the sense of a coherent, continuously accumulating self, is an illusion. Take a deep breath in, let it out, and you're a new you. There are no selves, only behaviors.

In this, Goldsmith's Buddhism meshes perfectly with his behaviorist-style coaching. He always tells his clients that he doesn't care about their past, doesn't care how they feel, doesn't care about their inner psyche—all he cares about is their future behavior. He provides them with a tightly structured program of things to do and a money-back guarantee that, if they do exactly what he tells them, they will get better. And they do. (He has given back only three hundred thousand dollars in the course of his career, owing to one failed coaching client and several failed classes.) What's more, though Goldsmith claims not to be teaching his clients about strategy, his Buddhism is also a fine recipe for business in general. In business, after all, as in Buddhism, the self is an obstacle. The thing that inhibits innovation, both corporate and spiritual, is attachment to the self, in the form of habits and doctrines and smugness and memories of the past. The rational businessman, like the good Buddhist, considers each moment afresh, unencumbered by old frameworks, and asks himself what he should do based on the evidence before him rather than on a sense of how a person such as him (or a company such as his) usually behaves. As Goldsmith would put it, he lets it go.

Goldsmith's anti-self approach is quite unusual in his field. Many executive coaches were trained as psychologists. Many started out in transactional analysis (the method popularized by the book "I'm O.K.—You're O.K."), when that was big in corporate training, back in the seventies, then took up empowerment theory in the eighties, and moved over to executive coaching in the nineties. Goldsmith, however, has no patience for the psychological approach. "My attitude is, it's easier to get un-fucked up than it is to understand why you are fucked up, so why don't you just get un-fucked up?" he says.

"Psychotherapy is not about change. It's about understanding. Nothing wrong with that. I think there was a study done of therapists back in the old days, called the battle of the therapists. Carl Rogers was the most popular—he was about empathetic listening and unconditional acceptance, which is great if your issue in life is acceptance. But if your issue in life is change he's dysfunctional. Albert Ellis was the least popular, because he was very confrontational, threw the shit right in your face, but most of his patients changed. There was one guy I coached who spent hours on 'Marshall, you don't understand, let me explain why I have these issues, let me explain my mother, my father.' Whine, whine, whine. I tell clients, 'Here's a quarter—call someone who cares.' They don't need empathy. They need someone to look 'em in the eye and say, 'If you want to change, do this.' "

Even if he didn't believe it was unproductive, Goldsmith would reject the therapeutic approach on the ground that it just takes too long. "One of my clients made eleven million bucks a year," he says, "and his boss says to me, 'How much of your time does he get?' I said, 'As little as necessary.' He said, 'It's a lot of money for as little as necessary.' I said, 'Well, how much of his eleven-million-dollar-a-year time do you want me to spend? Hell, he's making more than I am, I'm happy to come in and shoot the shit with the guy, hold his hand, it's up to you—it's your eleven million bucks.' You know what he said? As little as necessary. I said, 'I just want to make sure we have the same kind of vision here. I'm not in the time-spending business, I'm in the getting-better business.' "

One of Goldsmith's favorite facts about himself is that he has more than seven million frequent-flier miles on American Airlines alone. It is impossible, he tells people, unless you have at least a million or two miles yourself, to comprehend what that means. Once, when he was at the symphony with his wife, Lyda, she noticed him digging into the side of his chair and asked what he was doing; he realized that he was looking for a seat belt. Another time, he woke up and expressed amazement at how closely the painting on the wall re-

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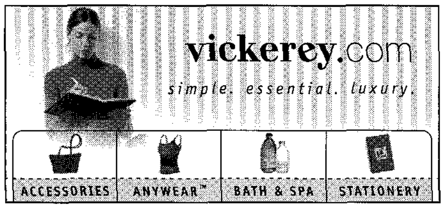

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sembled the one they had in their bedroom at home; Lyda told him that that was because they were at home.

He realizes that his life style is absurd, but he doesn't want to slow down. These days, in addition to his coaching (he works with about ten clients at a time, in different parts of the country), he teaches executive-education classes, gives speeches all over the world, and co-edits books on leadership (he gives the profits from the books to charity). He has co-founded a service called Financial Times Knowledge Dialogue, which enables people to talk with business "thought leaders" via video hookup. (He has also acquired, through the mail, a license to perform marriages from the Universal Life Church, and has so far performed seven or eight.)

Recently, he was away from home for a month. He flew to New Orleans on February 27th, taught a workshop for a group called the Conference Board, flew to New York and drove to Connecticut to teach an executive-education class the following morning, shot a video for an Internet course in Manhattan, taught a workshop in Westchester for the Thomson Corporation, flew to Philadelphia, met with a coaching client, flew to Vancouver that evening, flew to Oakland, drove to San Francisco, flew to Toulouse, France, and spent two days working there with a group from Motorola, flew to London to do more work with Motorola, flew back to New York to teach another workshop for the Thomson Corporation, flew to Atlanta to speak at a meeting of human-resources people, and finally, on March 21st, flew home.

In the early nineties, when his daughter, Kelly, was eleven, and his son, Bryan, was nine, Goldsmith started to worry that he might be spending too much time away from home, and decided he wanted to improve his performance as a parent. True to his method, he started asking his children for feedback. "I asked Kelly, 'How can I be a better dad?'" Goldsmith says. "She said, 'Daddy, you travel a lot, but what bothers me is the way you act when you come home. You talk on the phone, you work, you watch sports, you don't pay attention to me.' So I said, 'I'm sorry. Daddy's going to do better.'"

He decided it would help him to improve if he measured his progress, so for four years he tracked the number of days per year he spent at least four waking, non-television hours with his family. Sure enough, he improved. In 1991, he managed ninety-two days; in 1992, a hundred and ten; in 1993, a hundred and thirty-one; in 1994, a hundred and thirty-five days. "That's more than ninety-five per cent of fathers," he notes proudly. "The average American father spends seven to fifteen minutes a week in meaningful dialogue with the average American child. And I made more money when I spent a hundred and thirty-five days with the family than when I spent twenty, because I didn't play golf, didn't watch stupid football games, and didn't read the newspaper about dumb things that had nothing to do with my life. Then on January 1, 1995, I said, 'Kids, look! A hundred and thirty-five days! My goal this year is a hundred and fifty days!' Both kids said no. Teen-agers."

At the end of February, Goldsmith had a weekend window in his schedule, so he flew home to California. He lives in a gated community near San Diego named Fairbanks Ranch, because years ago the land was owned by Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and Mary Pickford. His house is an unpretentious two-story Tudor, which he and Lyda have decorated in an old-English style (except for the Buddhas everywhere): wood panelling, red curtains, a large collection of oil paintings, and even a knee-high suit of armor that Bryan gave him as a present. In the garage, Goldsmith keeps a nippy little green BMW convertible for everyday and, until March, a giant pink '57 Chevy Bel Air with furry dice for special occasions (he sold it, wanting to exchange it for a light-blue one)—"nothing but midlife-crisis cars," he says. In the back, there is a garden with a pool and a hot tub and a grill.

It is very peaceful in Fairbanks Ranch. Even during the day, there is almost no traffic, and at night little brown rabbits leap over the lawns. The weather is perfect. Bill Gates and the Sultan of Brunei are said to own homes in the neighborhood. When Goldsmith feels like going for a walk, he takes his two dogs (poodle, Welsh terrier) and drives to a small lake nearby, where there are ducks and swans and a little stone folly and a little stone bridge and an island in the middle with trees leaning over the water. "I live here, but it still seems to me absurdly nice," Goldsmith says. "It almost doesn't seem real. It's like living in Heaven."

One reason Fairbanks Ranch seems like Heaven to Goldsmith is that he grew up in a bad neighborhood—the rough part of Valley Station, Kentucky, just outside Fort Knox. His father owned a gas station, and the family lived between the gas station and a bar. There were a lot of other bars and strip joints nearby, and soldiers were always driving into town and getting drunk and getting into car wrecks or bar fights. The street in front of his house was nicknamed the Dixie Dieway, because so many people met with grisly and undermotivated ends on it. Goldsmith remembers nine deaths outside his door while he was growing up.

"In many ways, my kids have it harder," he says, "because they're brought up with more expectations. I mean, when I graduated from college, it was a victory. My life always has a certain dreamlike quality to me. The odds on getting where I am from where I came from? Real close to zero. I never saw a house like the house I live in now. I live in a seven-thousand-five-hundred-square-foot house in what was ranked the year before last as the most desirable affluent community in the United States. I have an acre lot, a swimming pool, a lovely art collection, and five original Tiffany lamps. When my parents came to visit me here, they thought it was a dreamworld."

The weekend Goldsmith spent at home, Kelly was there for a couple of days, and he found her in the kitchen unpacking takeout containers for a dinner party the family was giving that evening. Kelly is small and quick; she wears her blond hair in a ponytail and is, at the age of twenty-two, as Goldsmith informs very nearly everyone he meets, already famous for having appeared on the TV reality show "Survivor." Kelly and her father are, they both agree, exactly alike. They have the personality tests to prove it. (Goldsmith loves personality tests.) The main differences between father and daughter are the fact that Marshall has bungee-

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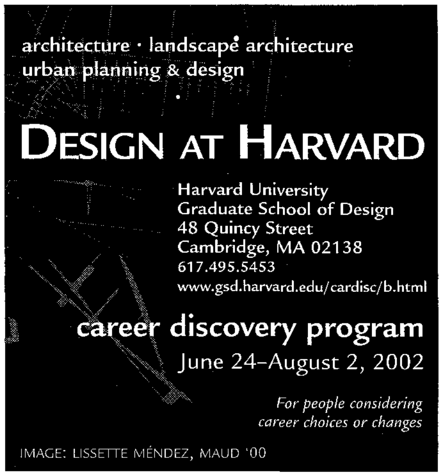

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jumped and Kelly hasn't, and the number of hits they generate on Google (Marshall, four thousand; Kelly, five thousand). That evening, Kelly had a scab on her chin because, several days previously, she had tripped while running back into a bar to retrieve her credit card.

"You won the saint award that night," Kelly said to her father. "Though you weren't very sympathetic after the first half hour of me screaming, 'My acting career is over!' "

"Yeah, I guess I lapsed into my normal mode," Goldsmith conceded. "Of all the coaches in the world, I don't lead the pack on empathy. On the other hand, you would not exactly be referred to as the queen of empathy yourself."

Kelly, as father and daughter had delightedly discovered on the Web site SurvivorSucks.com, was now internationally notorious for having unleashed a bitchy tirade at the final "Survivor" Tribal Council. "You think I give feedback?" Goldsmith says. "Pah. SurvivorSucks.com, *that's* feedback. If half my clients had gotten the same feedback Kelly got, they'd be in a mental hospital."

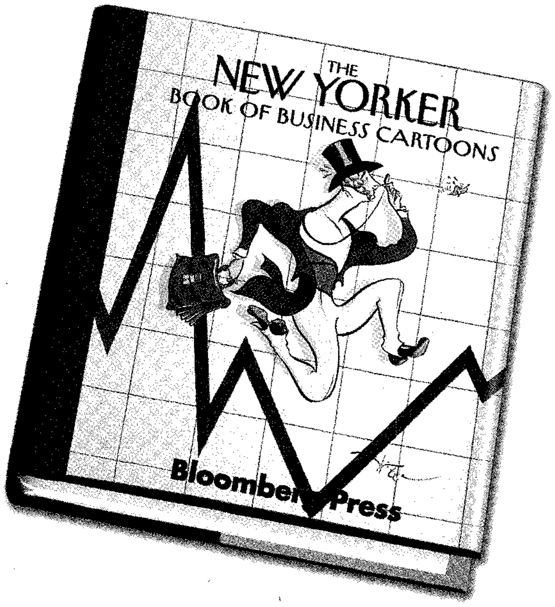
"That was the previous Kelly," Kelly said pertly. "We forgive the previous Kelly. We learn from the past and move forward."

Goldsmith long ago realized that Buddhism had certain limitations as a child-rearing technique. But by nature, anyhow, he is more inclined to the carrot than to the stick. He recently announced to Kelly and Bryan that for each grandchild they gave him (up to five) he would pay its parent five per cent of his net worth. Adopting was fine, and he didn't care if they were married, he just wanted grandkids.

"Our family would rank very low on the guilt scale," Goldsmith reflected, watching Kelly throw away the takeout containers. "You, for instance, would not be one of the world's most guilt-ridden people."

Goldsmith still enjoyed reminding his daughter that she had telephoned him from her freshman dorm room to complain that her closet was too small to accommodate her formal dresses. Then again, when sending her off to college he had advised, "Take easy classes, get good grades, and party a lot—you're not

Very funny business, indeed!



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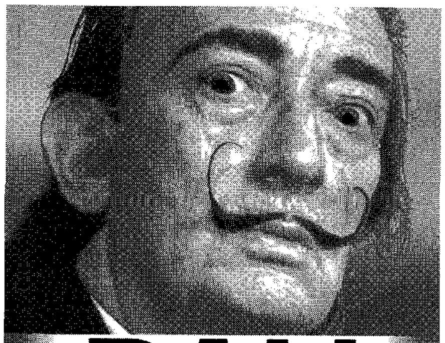

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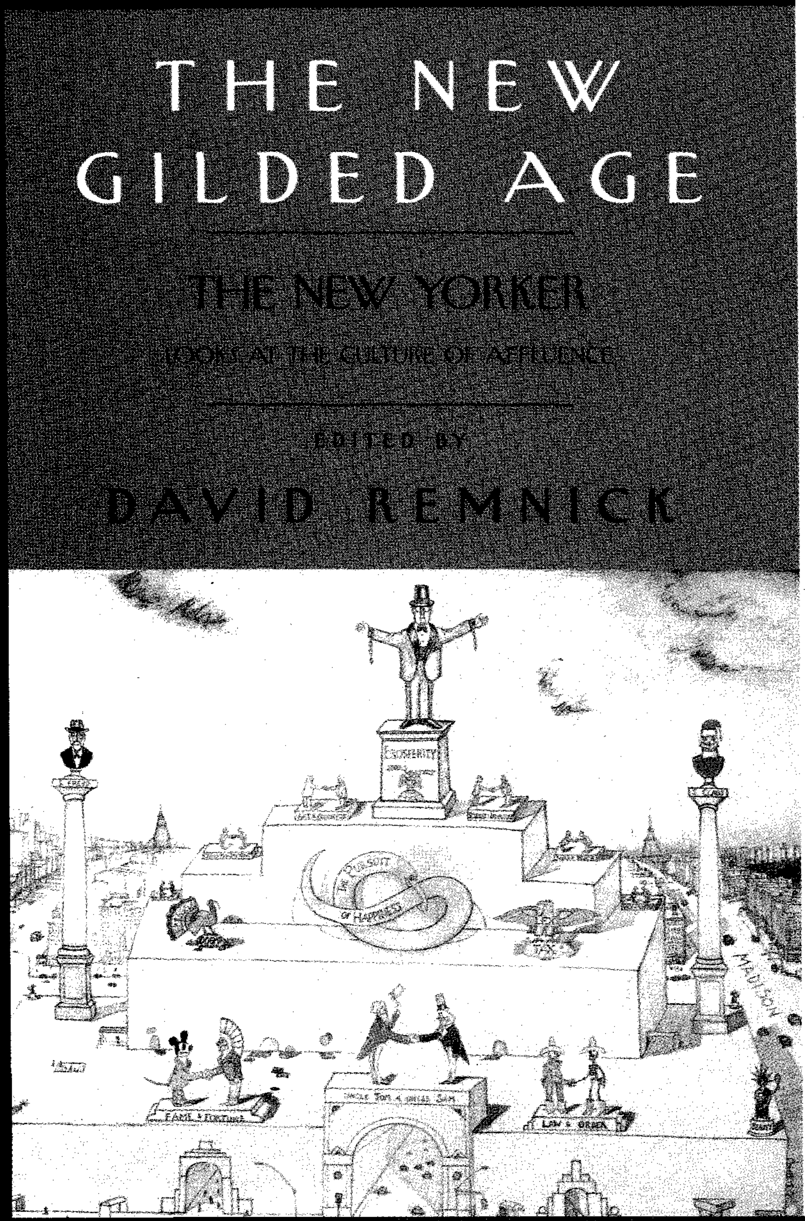
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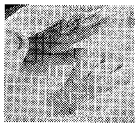

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going to remember half of what you learn anyway."

"Why should I be guilty?" Kelly asked. "I mean, does anyone look back on life and say, 'I wish I'd been more guilty?' "

"Hell no!" Goldsmith cried, with an affectionate, that's-my-girl expression. "Who needs it?"

Goldsmith was raised as a Southern Baptist, but he was asked to leave his church when he was fourteen because of an attitude problem. "I was always very mathematically oriented," he says, "so I made a list of all the religions in the world and the percentage of the world population for each, and I asked the Sunday-school teacher, 'Are Muslims going to Heaven or Hell?' Hell. Shintos and Buddhists? Hell. Catholics? Definitely Hell. How about the Baptists—are they all going to Heaven? No. Well, I gave everybody the benefit of the doubt, and ninety-five per cent of the world was going to Hell. They didn't just get to die; they got to suffer for eternity—and the others got to kiss God's ass for eternity. Talk about sick! I said, 'He's worse than Hitler—and he was one of the worst guys in history!' Needless to say, my negative comparison of God and Hitler was not well received, and they told me to come back when I changed my attitude. So you can see why I ended up a Buddhist."

In fact, Goldsmith had an attitude problem all through high school—to the extent that, when a former teacher turned up at a conference and saw him setting up equipment before his speech, she happily told one of her colleagues that she had never thought young Marshall would amount to anything, so wasn't it wonderful that he had found a job as a video technician. After high school, Goldsmith went to an engineering school in Terre Haute, grew his hair and a long beard, became a hippie, and protested the Vietnam War. He got an M.B.A. from Indiana University, where he met Lyda, and then moved to California to get a Ph.D. in organizational behavior from U.C.L.A., because it sounded fun.

While he was living in Los Angeles, he joined up with some people who called themselves the "no-name group," and whose purpose was to discuss the

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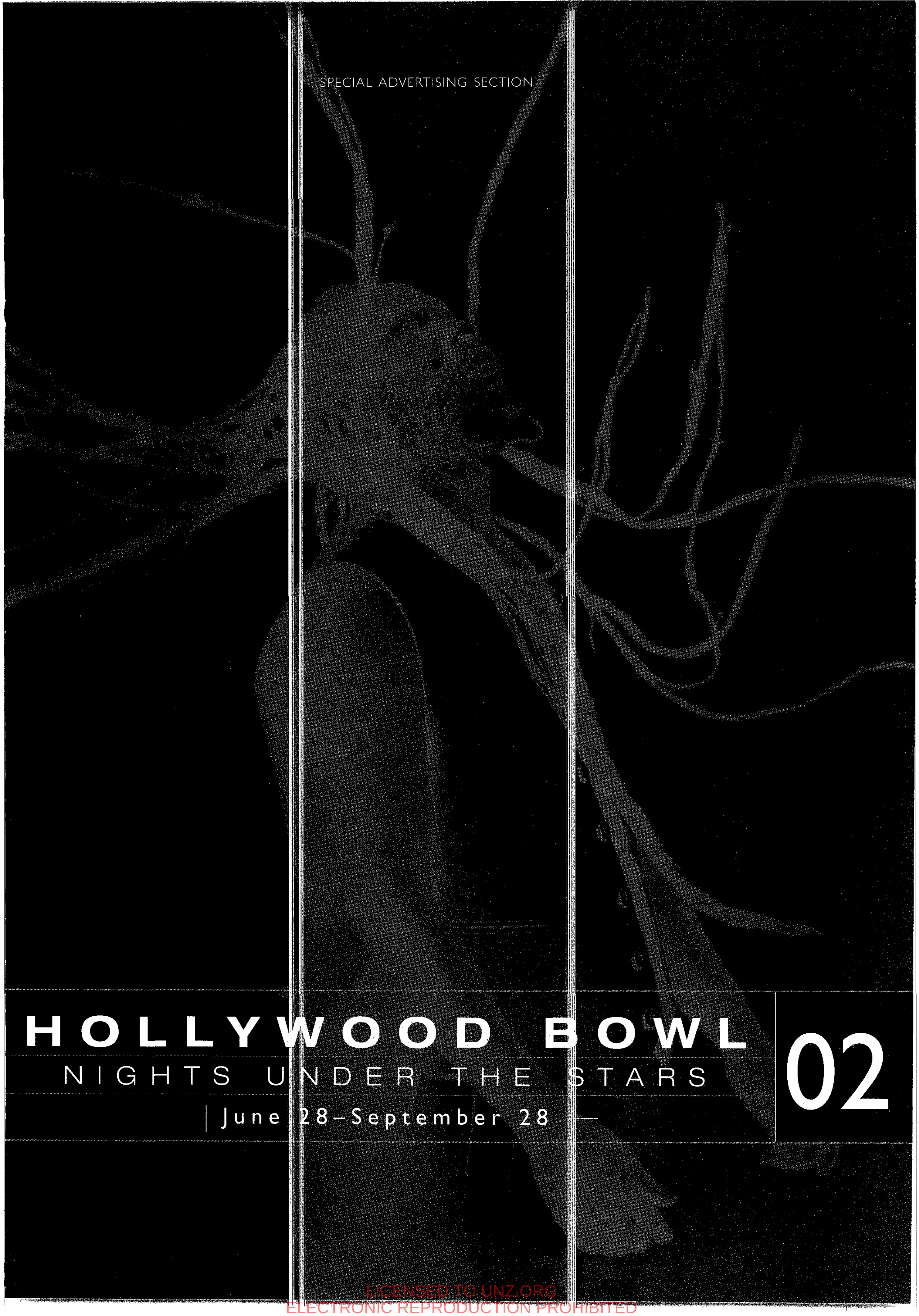

HOLLYWOOD BOWL

NIGHTS UNDER THE STARS

June 28–September 28

02

BY RICHARD J. PIETSCHMANN

After eight seasons as executive director of the New York Philharmonic, Deborah Borda couldn't believe her good luck when two years ago she was offered the job of Los Angeles Philharmonic Association executive vice president and managing director. "One of the reasons I took the job here was because it's like managing the New York Philharmonic, Carnegie Hall, and Tanglewood combined," says the former violist.

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Adding to that cultural trifecta is, of course, the venerable Hollywood Bowl. Widely acclaimed as one of the finest outdoor venues in the world, it has hunkered in its sylvan Bolton Canyon setting, just north of Hollywood Boulevard, since the nineteen-twenties. "I had been at the Bowl on tour with an orchestra, and I remembered it as a magical place," says Borda. "When I went back fifteen years later, it had the exact same effect on me."

The Hollywood Bowl has exerted a similar pull on artists and performers since before 1927, when Frank Lloyd Wright's son, architect Lloyd Wright, created the second orchestra shell in the shape of a pyramid from the dismantled set of the film "Robin Hood." The current cupped shell, its acoustics updated by famed local architect Frank Gehry (whose widely anticipated downtown Walt Disney Concert Hall is set to open next year), has been in place since 1929. The Bowl's elliptical seating area spreads up the hillside like an empty vessel "poised to fill with music and ascend," according to one description. The combination of setting, history, and the aura produced by being at the nexus of the entertainment industry has a magnetic effect.

"The Bowl is a special draw for all performing artists," says Borda. "They go out on stage and stand there and look up at the stunning panorama of eighteen thousand seats and think: 'What a place. I can't believe I'm here.' It's a legendary spot, and they all want to be able to say, 'I played the Hollywood Bowl.'"

All the greats have played the Bowl. In 1920, even before there were permanent seats, Lionel Barrymore directed a Thanksgiving pageant at the site. Copland to Heifetz, Rubinstein to Bernstein, Pavarotti to Baryshnikov have conducted or performed on this stage.

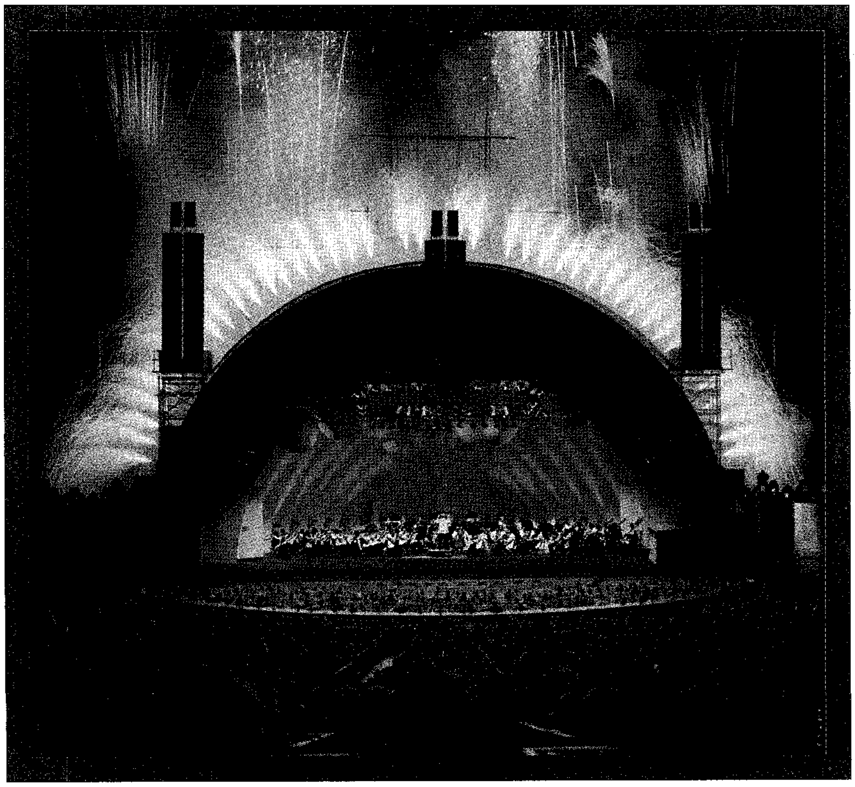
Repeatedly, history has been made here. In 1936, French opera star Lily Pons set an all-time Bowl attendance record of 26,410 paid admissions when the seating capacity was only 20,000. In 1942, after Vladimir Horowitz's performance of Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 3," the composer came on stage and told the pianist that this was the way he had always dreamed his concerto should be played.

But pop, jazz, and other popular art forms have also made history at the Bowl. Frank Sinatra was the first pop singer to perform at the venue in 1943 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Judy Garland sang during a rare summer downpour in 1961, and not one audience member left. In 1964, with Beatlemania at its most febrile, the Fab Four arrived for their performance in an armored truck. Garth Brooks did his first show ever with an orchestra here, and so did Marcel Marceau.

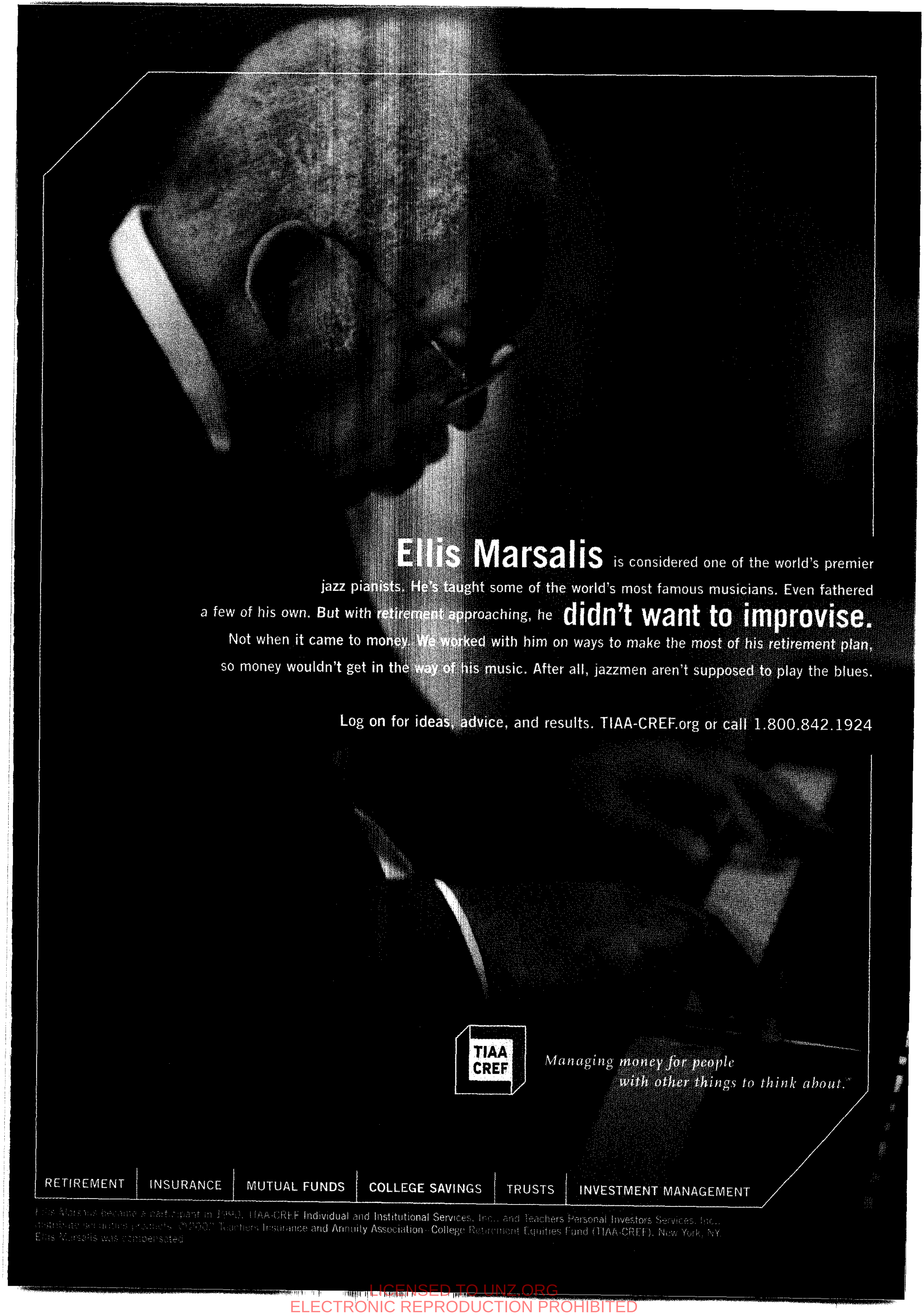
"We can never lose sight that classical music is at our roots," says Borda. "On the other hand, the wonderful thing about the Bowl is that we've been able to bring in entirely new audiences with different kinds of offerings. John Mauceri and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra have given new life to film and theatre music, displaying scenes from productions on a giant screen while the music is playing—thus creating a whole new art form." The burgeoning of world music has been stunning, says Borda, and a night dedicated to Brazilian rhythms is always enthusiastically received. "It's always an electric evening when Tony Bennett sings," she adds. "And the 'Sing-a-Long Sound of Music,' well, it's a real hoot. These programs are the essence of the Bowl."

The artful blend of highbrow, hoi polloi, and hip over the course of a summer is ample evidence that the Hollywood Bowl is doing what it does best.

(L.A.-based writer Richard J. Pietschmann has contributed to *Departures* and *Travel + Leisure*, among other publications.)



All photos courtesy of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association



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THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL CALENDAR OF EVENTS SAMPLER

As Los Angeles' premier summer program for evenings of music and dance under the stars, Hollywood Bowl 2002 will present world famous artists doing what they do best. Here are just some of the spectacular season's highlights.

June 30

Polynesian rhythms come to the Bowl for the first time with music and dance from Hawaii, Tahiti, and other Pacific Islands featuring Keali'i Reichel and The Brothers Cazimero among others.

July 7

Spirited Latin, reggae, and ska performed by Hugh Masekela, Eddie Palmieri, Yerba Buena, and local Grammy winner Ozomatli.

July 10

Swing takes over with Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, the Glenn Miller Orchestra, and Ken Peplowski's Tribute to the Benny Goodman Big Band.

July 14

Compelling vocalist and five-time Grammy winner Lauryn Hill rounds out a roster to include South Africa's Mahotella Queens and fado singer, Mariza.

July 16

Pianists Emanuel Ax and Yoko Nozaki perform a program of Tanaka, Mozart, and Beethoven, with Yasuo Shinozaki conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

July 17

On the anniversary of her death, Billie Holiday is honored in a program to include Jimmy Scott, Dianne Reeves, and the Terence Blanchard Quintet.

July 19–20

In an evening of pulsating Latin rhythms, Charles Floyd conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic backing Sergio Mendes and Brasil 2002 and Pink Martini.

July 21

Puccini's "La bohème" with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra conducted by John Mauceri; the Opera Pacific Chorus, tenor Ramón Vargas, and soprano Patricia Racette featured.

July 24

Grammy-winner Natalie Cole and jazz pianist Joe Sample to perform.

July 30 and August 1

James Galway performs Bolcom's "Flute Concerto" with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Miguel Harth-Bedoya conducting.

August 2–3

Cirque Éloize's Bowl début in "Cirque Orchestra," which will employ a specially built ninety-five-foot truss constructed in front of the stage to acrobatic effect.

August 6

Pianist Yefim Bronfman plays Bartók's Piano "Concerto No. 1" with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in a reprise of their Grammy-winning album.

August 9–10

"The Lord of the Rings" composer Howard Shore premières a suite from his award-winning score composed for an evening of "Musical Mythologies," and performed by the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra.

August 11

The classic reggae of Steel Pulse, Burning Spear, and Lucky Dube.

August 13

Music director Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic as acclaimed baritone Thomas Quasthoff sings Mahler.

August 14

Soul arrives at the Bowl with Isaac Hayes, saxophonist Maceo Parker, and Arrested Development.

August 16–17

Scenes from Rodgers and Hammerstein's soaring film musicals are projected on-screen as the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, conducted by John Mauceri, backs the original vocal tracks.

August 18

The JVC Jazz Festival returns to the Bowl with George Benson and Fourplay among the many featured guests.

August 22

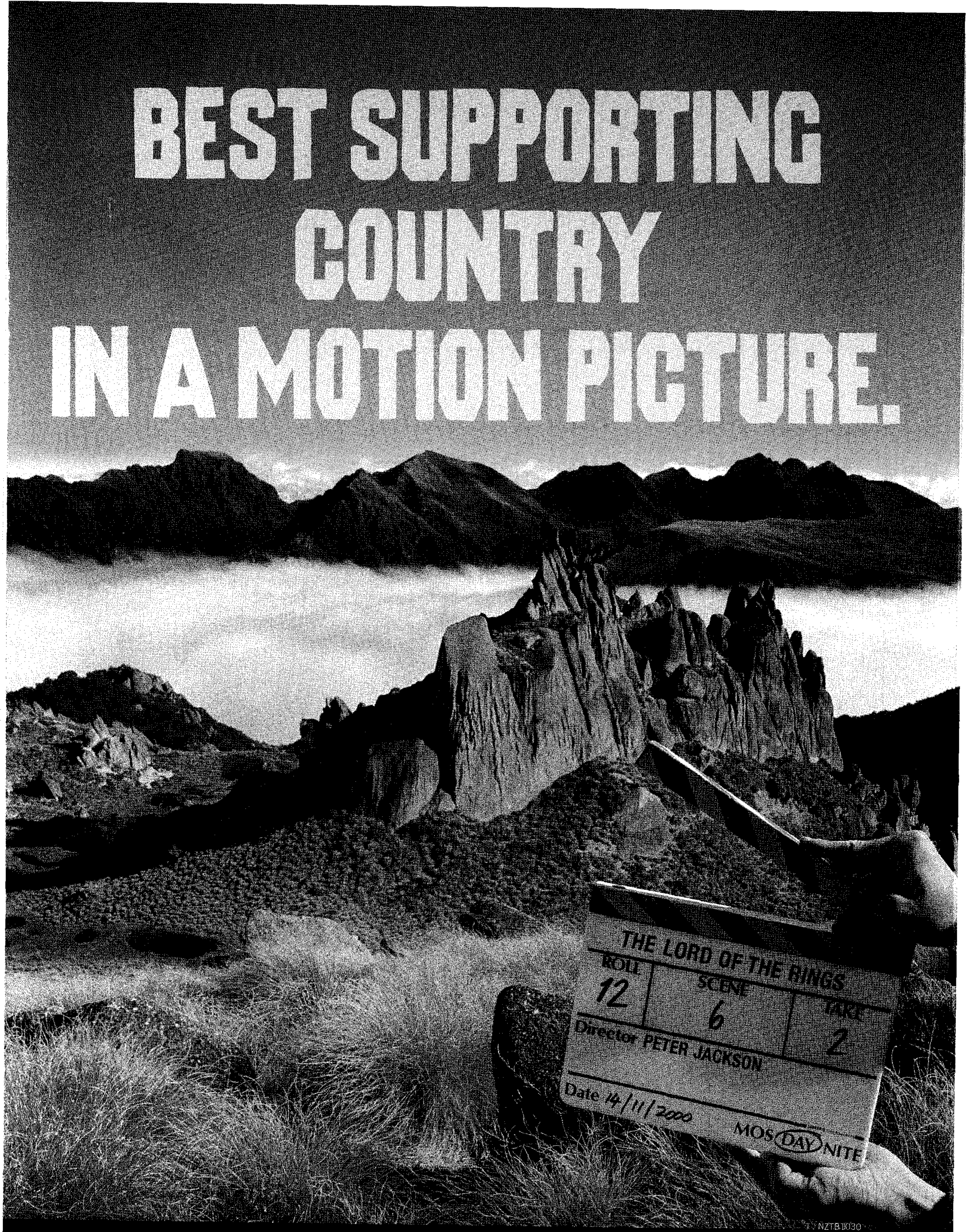
The Russian National Orchestra conducted by Alexander Vedernikov performs highlights from Russian and Italian operas sung by soprano Galina Gorchakova and baritone Sergei Leiferkus.

August 25

Soul songstress Erykah Badu to perform. African group Zap Mama to lend hypnotic beats to the scene.

August 28

Chick Corea reunites with celebrated former band members, including Gary Burton, Michael Brecker, Flora Purim, and Airto Moreira.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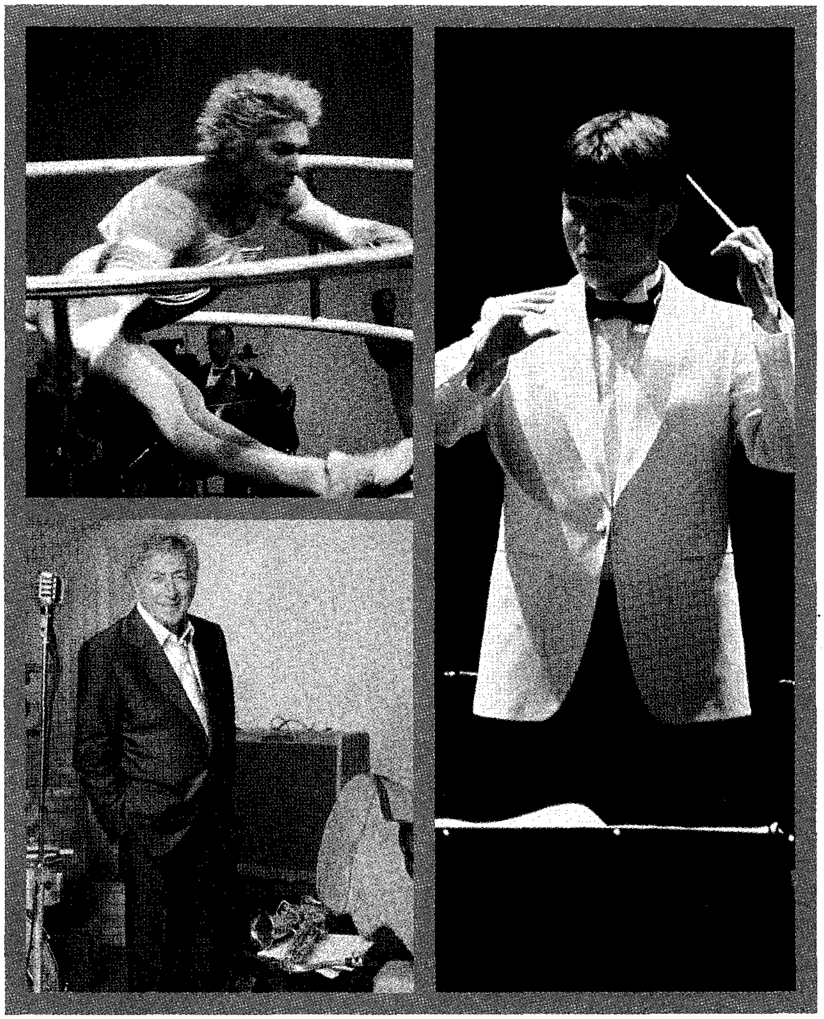
August 29
In a program of Bartók, Mozart, and Kodály, pianist and conductor Jeffrey Kahane performs with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra.

August 30–31
The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra pays homage to New York with Rebecca Luker, Davis Gaines, and Daniel Rodriguez singing songs from Hollywood and Broadway.

September 6–7
John Mauceri leads The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra in excerpts from Mendelssohn's "Midsummer's Night Dream," danced by the Pacific Northwest Ballet Company.

September 8
The fortieth anniversary of bossa nova is celebrated by Gal Costa with special guests Dori Caymmi and his band, Leny Adrade, Oscar Castro-Neves, and Monica Salmaso.

September 22
Undisputed King of the Blues, B.B. King, and a host of blues shakers including George Thorogood & The Destroyers and The Fabulous Thunderbirds are set to headline.



The Hollywood Bowl Season (June 28–September 28)

Single tickets (from $1–$125) go on sale May 4th and can be purchased at the box office, 2301 North Highland Avenue, Hollywood. Open Tuesday–Sunday, noon–6 P.M. and during intermission of all performances, or through Ticketmaster at 213-480-3232.

Subscription series are on sale now, with prices for remaining seats ranging from $90 for three World Music performances to $430 for ten Friday or Saturday night concerts. To purchase series tickets or for more information, visit **www.hollywoodbowl.com** or call **323-850-2000**.

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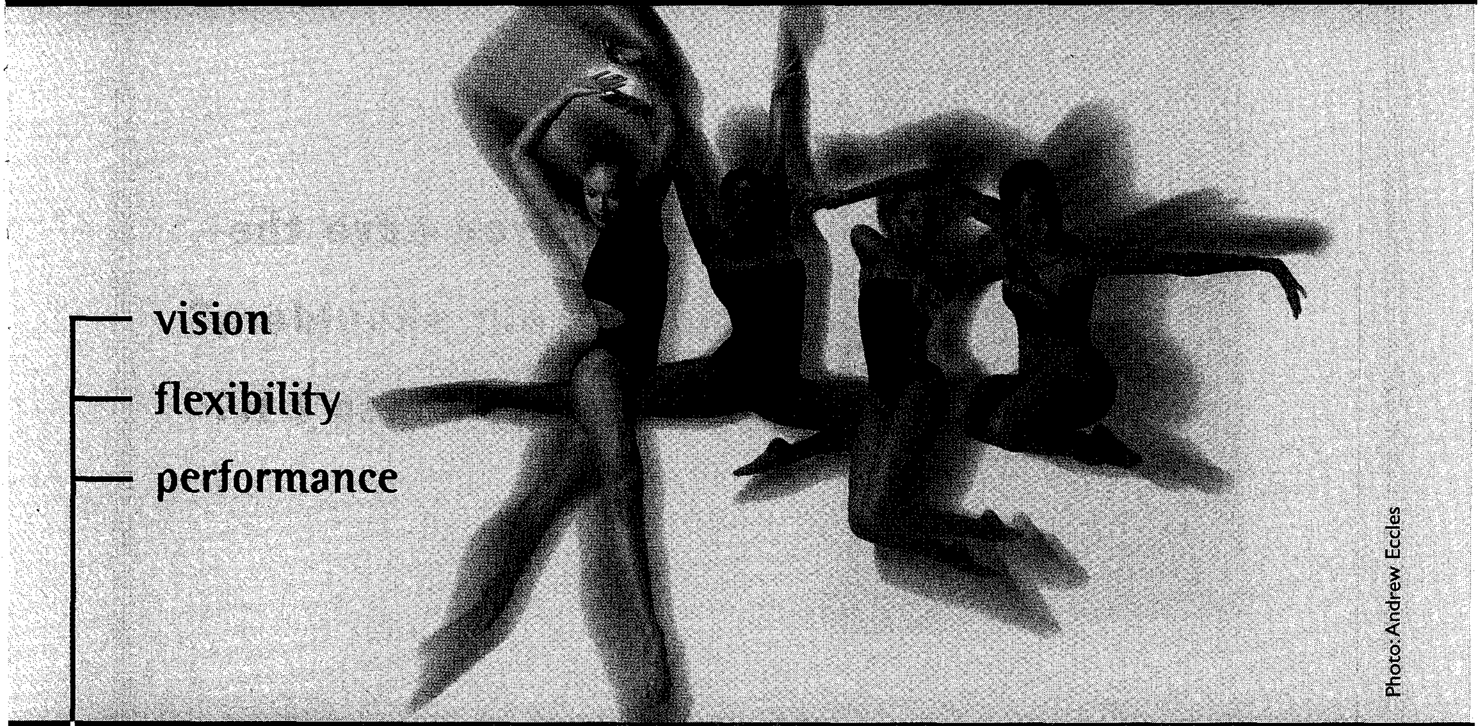

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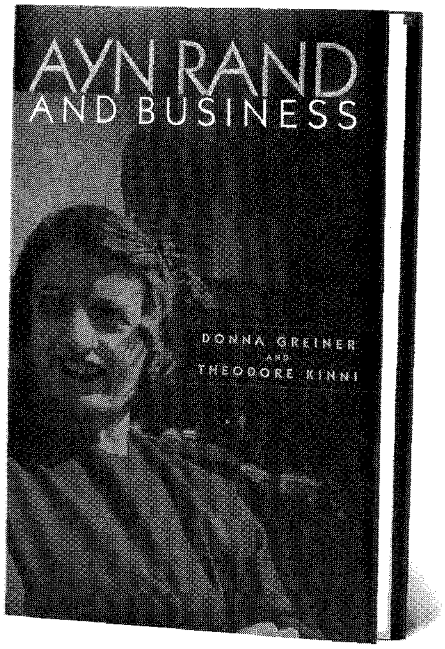
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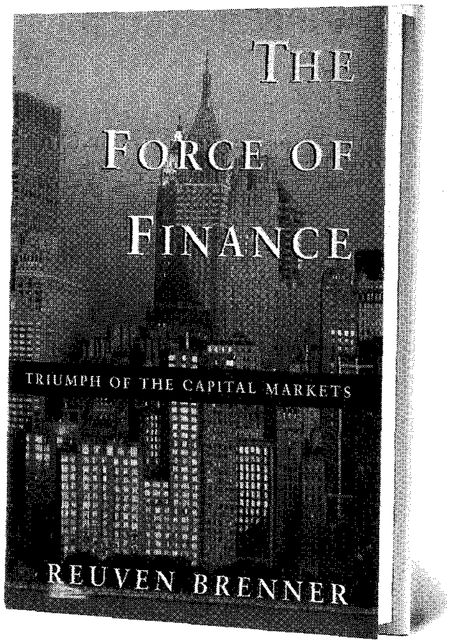
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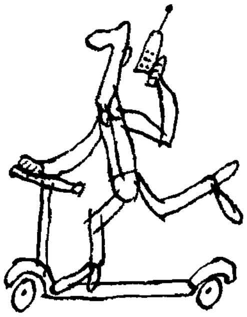
nature of life. He also started going to encounter groups. For five months, he sat in a group for eight hours a day, two days a week. He would lead a group, sitting on the floor, for two hours, then watch a group for two hours, then be in a group for two hours, and then critique the groups for two hours. The sessions involved insults, tears, and tense, miserable silences. Goldsmith loved every minute. Even now, memories of the days in which he would torment the people in his charge make him giggle happily. "They'd say, 'What the hell am I here for?' " he recalls. "I'd say, 'What do you want to be here for?' I'd say, 'How do you feel right now?' They'd say, 'I'm pissed off because you won't tell me something.' So I'd say, 'Why do you want me to tell you what to do?' "

From his experience with encounter groups he learned two lessons that would prove useful in his subsequent career: people are made extremely anxious by unstructured environments, and unexpurgated, face-to-face honesty is not usually helpful in business. "If you're with a bunch of strangers, you really learn how you come across to people," he says. "It's like, My God, these people think I'm an ass! And everybody thought you were an ass before but nobody told you. On the other hand, they tried encounter groups in hospitals with doctors and nurses—total disaster. One person would say, 'How do you feel about me?' and someone would tell him, 'I hate your guts, you're an arrogant jerk.' It can be very dysfunctional."

In a sense, though, 360° feedback is the direct descendant of encounter groups. The basic idea is the same: the sudden, shocking revelation of what everyone really thinks of you jolts you into becoming a humbler, wiser person who doesn't act like an ass. The difference is that the 360s are not enlisted for recreational self-improvement. Now humility, self-knowledge, and sensitivity are business assets.



The chief financial officer sat at a small, round table in the conference room next to his office. It was the end of the day, it had grown dark outside, and the C.F.O.'s skin was pale and flat under the fluorescent light. He was nearly fifty, thin and grave, and his hair was beginning to gray. He had an air about him so distant and introverted that it seemed as though the muscles of his face were being operated by remote control. He was dressed, like everyone in his company, in business casual—in his case, a light-green oxford shirt and a pair of khakis.

Two years ago, at the start of his training, the C.F.O. had stood accused of acting superior, not listening, not treating people with respect, and in general failing to adjust gracefully to the corporate culture. He had spent most of his career on the East Coast at companies in which the expression of flamboyantly hostile opinions was as normal as saying hello. Then, just over three years ago, he was appointed to his current job, in a large Midwestern corporation where everyone was nice to his face but gossiped endlessly behind his back, and before long he found himself so thoroughly entangled in resentment and ill will that his C.E.O. decided that only Marshall Goldsmith could extract him.

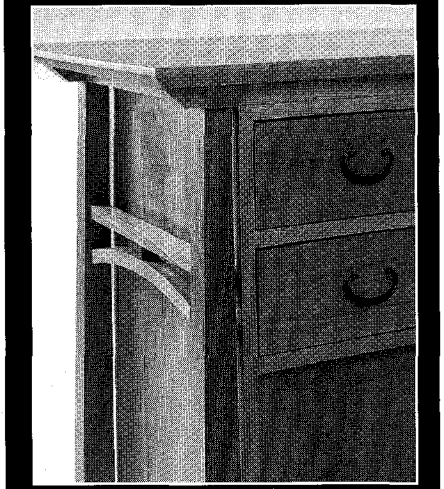
The C.F.O. had had a coach before, but that coach had been a touchy-feely kind of coach who wanted to probe the C.F.O.'s psyche and figure out why he was doing the things he did. Goldsmith, the C.F.O. had found to his relief when they started working together, was utterly uninterested in why. This session was the C.F.O.'s last. After a dozen meetings with Goldsmith, his training was complete and his 360s indicated that he was a changed man.

"Let's get rolling," Goldsmith said. "Here's your feedback report. Treats people with respect? Excellent, only two people gave you a zero." Zero meant no change. "Acting arrogant and superior? Only two negatives out of twenty-six."

Goldsmith leafed through bar graphs he had drawn up to represent these figures, and found a page of longer comments.

"Want to start with the positives or the negatives?" he asked.

THOS. MOSER
CABINETMAKERS



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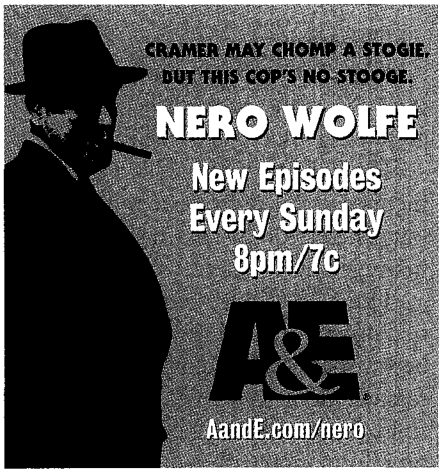

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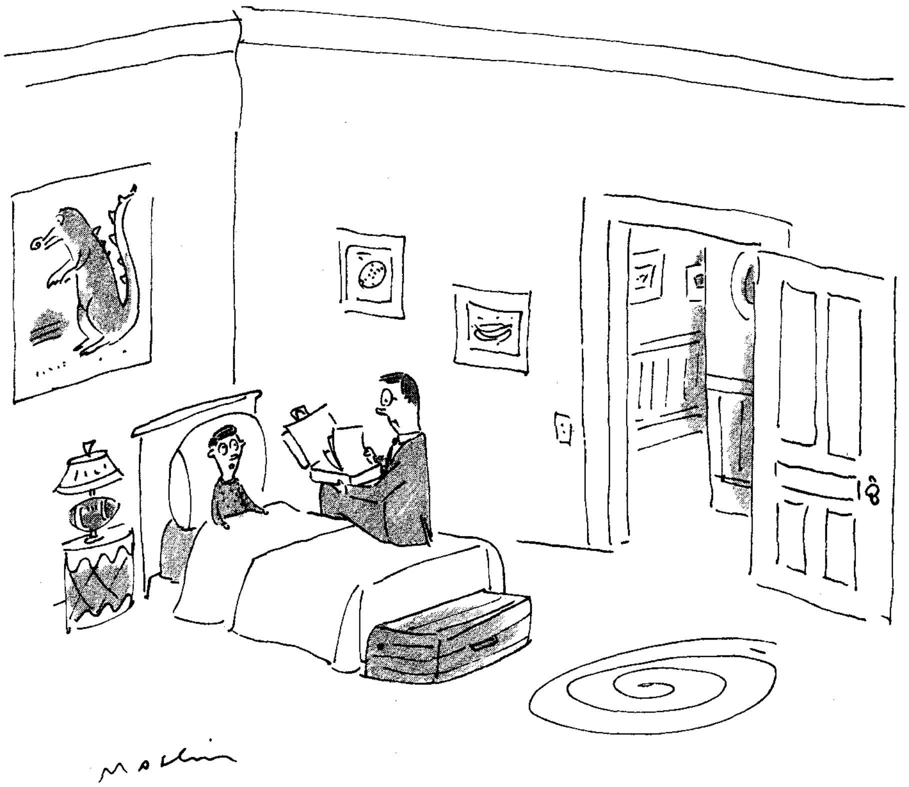


"When did your dad first explain foreign-currency exchange rates to ***you****?"*

"Negatives."

"O.K. 'Continue to tone down arrogance,' 'Be more approachable,' 'Work hard at showing respect' in stressful situations."

The C.F.O. took notes on these comments with his right hand and, with the long fingers of his left hand, carefully massaged his forehead.

The C.F.O. had been, Goldsmith said often, the ideal client. One, he had been widely considered incurable, so his remarkable improvement made Goldsmith look good. Two, he had approached his reformation with the detached discipline of an accountant. And, three, although half the things of which he had been accused were not really his fault, he had wasted no time making excuses for himself.

This last virtue was the one that impressed Goldsmith most. "I have heard every damn excuse in the history of the world," he says. "I've heard people blame their mother, their father, their aunt, their uncle, God, the C.E.O., the company, where they were brought up, blah blah blah blah blah. I tell people, 'When you're fifty years old, blaming Mom and Dad is weak.' Who gives a shit? Quit whining. Let it go! One guy from Greece said, 'Marshall, you don't understand my culture, you don't understand Greek males.' I said, 'I've met a lot of Greek males, and most of them aren't assholes. Maybe it's you!' "

The thing that really gets Goldsmith going, though, is when his clients tell him that their colleagues' evaluations aren't fair. "Don't give me some whiny bullshit about 'It's not fair,' " Goldsmith cries, working himself up into a lather at the mere thought of it. "Don't even begin to get into 'It's not fair'! You're a multi-millionaire executive in a huge corporation, living in the United States in a big house with a nice family. Any time we look in the mirror and say life isn't fair, you know what else we should say? Thank God."

"Ready for good news?" Goldsmith said after a minute, when the C.F.O. had finished writing.

"Sure."

" 'I recognize a great desire he has to achieve his goals and I am proud and pleased to be a part of his team.' 'A model for senior leadership.' This is great! 'Listens very well.' 'Better listener.' You didn't see that two years ago! Good job!"

Goldsmith looked up from the report and took off his reading glasses.

"So," he asked, turning to the C.F.O. with a big smile, "what are your reflections?"

"Well, obviously I'm delighted with the positive results," the C.F.O. said slowly. "And you and I know that one of the goals of this, in addition to making me perceived to be a better person, is to have the official stamp of approval that I am a better person."

"It's statistically documented!"

"So I know this isn't about my inner soul or whether I'm going to Heaven. But, in all candor, I'm surprised there are still some negatives."

"At all?" Goldsmith said, amazed.

"Yes. I'm disappointed about the two people who said I was no better at acting arrogant and in two cases worse. And I'm surprised that I haven't gotten a better score here, and the one guy there."

The C.F.O. began turning over the pages of the report, scrutinizing the left sides of the graphs.

"Let me give you a little help here," Goldsmith said, putting his hand down on the report to get the C.F.O.'s attention. "There's a huge difference between changing behavior and changing perceptions. I was surprised there weren't more negatives."

"Oh, really."

"Nothing to do with you. I've just seen thousands of these things. You're good. You're not that good. You ain't gonna win 'em all."

"I'll let it go," the C.F.O. said.

"Just drop it!" Goldsmith agreed gaily. "One person out of twenty-six didn't find Jesus on this one. You know what? It happens!" He laughed a big hooting laugh. "Twenty-five out of twenty-six? Not only did you do well—you were lucky. Let's get real. Imagine you were working at McKinsey. Shit, *God* wouldn't get twenty-five out of twenty-six at McKinsey. So you know what I say?"

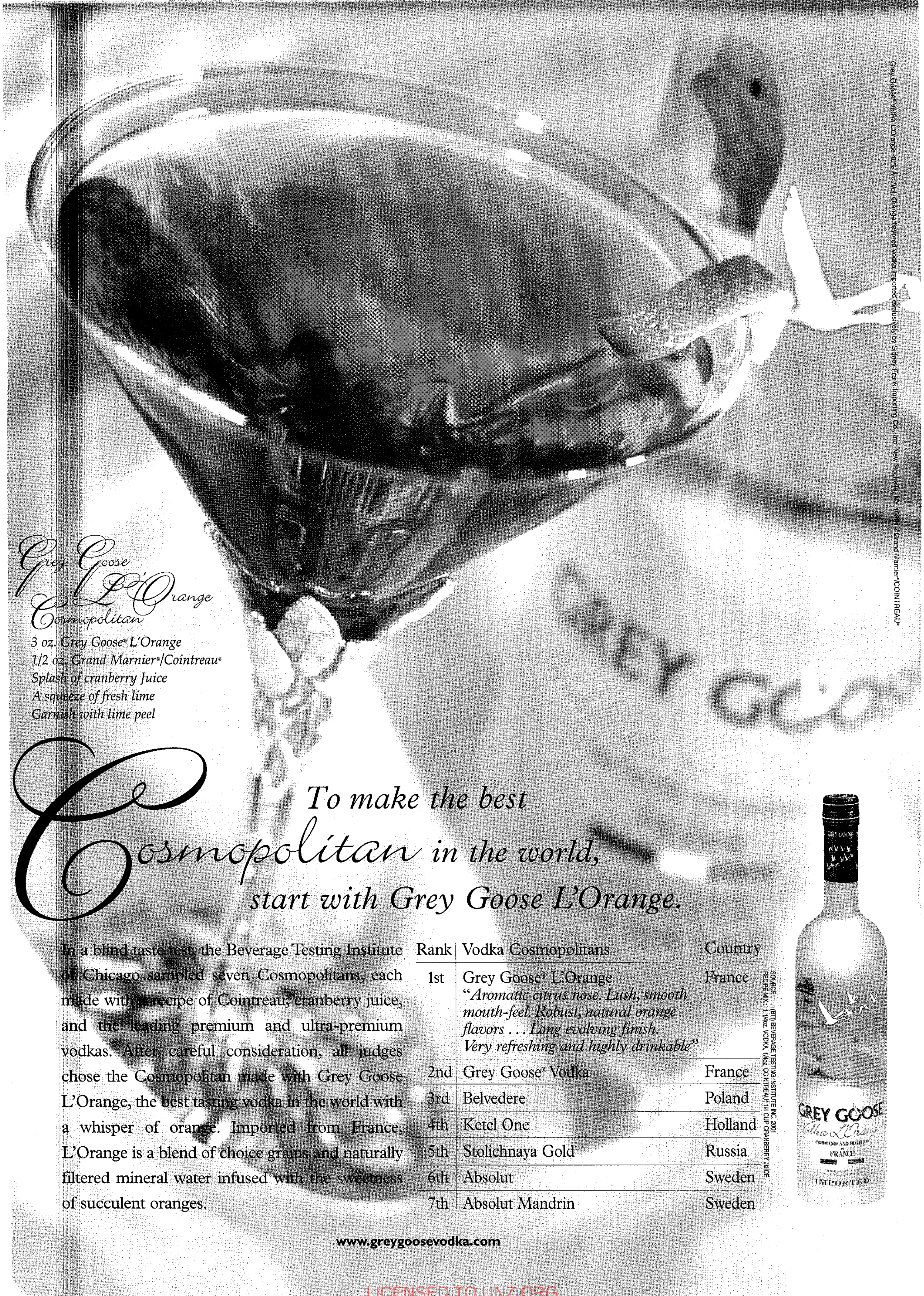
The C.F.O., having worked with Goldsmith for two years, knew exactly what.

"Declare victory and move on," he recited obediently.

"Declare victory and move on!" Goldsmith echoed, pleased that the C.F.O. had learned his lesson so well.

"Thank you," the C.F.O. said.

Goldsmith grinned. "Life is good!" ♦



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2nd	Grey Goose® Vodka	France
3rd	Belvedere	Poland
4th	Ketel One	Holland
5th	Stolichnaya Gold	Russia
6th	Absolut	Sweden
7th	Absolut Mandrin	Sweden

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RECIPE MIX: 1 1/4oz. VODKA, 1/4oz. COINTREAU®, 1/4 CUP CRANBERRY JUICE

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PROFILES

THE MOGUL MAYOR

Mike Bloomberg adds it all up.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Michael Bloomberg is impatient with words but likes numbers. His public appearances, while notable for their brevity, nearly always feature some figure or factlet that he finds salient—the size of the city's police force, say (forty thousand officers), or the year the World Trade Center was conceived (1960), or the proportion of New Yorkers who are African-American (one in four). Among the first pledges that he made upon taking office was that every month he would post on the Internet an exact head count of his staff. Current total: four hundred and ninety-seven.

Bloomberg himself is New York's hundred-and-eighth mayor, a job he acquired by spending more money on his campaign than anyone in the history of the country (seventy-four million dollars). He recently turned sixty, and, based on his stake in Bloomberg L.P., the privately held financial-data empire that he founded, he is, according to *Forbes*, the seventy-second-richest person in the world, up ten places from last year. Bloomberg's driver's license puts his height at five feet ten, which means that he is either taller than he looks or shorter than he says. His girlfriend, Diana Taylor, is five feet nine and a half, and when they stand next to each other, as the *News* recently pointed out, she towers over him.

Every new mayor recasts the job in his own image; Bloomberg, perhaps not surprisingly, has already pushed this further than most. He has, for example, declined to move into Gracie Mansion. (The city-owned residence, completed in 1804, has not, Bloomberg explained, "had a face-lift for some time.") Instead, he has opted to remain in his five-story town house, on East Seventy-ninth Street, which features a foyer done in Egyptian porphyry, French Empire sideboards, and a library whose hue Bloomberg's decorator once compared to "a bottle of cognac held up to the light, all glowing cognac colors." Shortly after his victory in November, Bloomberg held an intimate get-acquainted dinner for the five borough presidents at his town house. He served Château Haut-Brion, which retails for at least a hundred and fifty dollars a bottle, and sent each guest home with a giant cookie decorated in icing with the seal of his or her borough. The fifty-one members of the City Council he invited over for cocktails. Afterward, some of them wondered about their host's decision to serve caviar at a time when the city seems headed toward the worst fiscal crisis since perhaps the Depression, but in the end the consensus was that it had been the right thing to do. The Mayor has four other homes, in Westchester, Vail, London, and Bermuda. When he takes the weekend off, he refuses, on principle, to say where he's headed.

Bloomberg is the first to point out that, according to the numbers, New York is in deep trouble. In February, when he presented the outline of his spending plan, he dispensed with the usual preliminaries and instead of low-balling the problem, as is City Hall custom, forecast a budget gap bigger than anyone had predicted. Bloomberg put the size of the gap at $4.8 billion, which is, by coincidence, roughly the size of his own personal fortune. To meet a shortfall of this magnitude, he pointed out, sacrifice would be required from everyone. "The two hundred and fifty thousand people who work for New York City do a pretty good job," he said.

PHOTOGRAPH BY HARRY BENSON

Bloomberg is casual to the point of offhandedness; when he speaks, his message seems to be that the real work of his mayoralty is taking place somewhere else.

not hold doors
Do not hold doors
not lean on door
7
Give to charity.
Just not here.

"So you can't just rush in and say, 'Let's just do things better.' " (Later, the Mayor qualified this, saying that a more accurate number to use for the city workforce might be three hundred and six thousand or, alternatively, three hundred and sixty-three thousand.)

Depending once again on how you count, the mayoralty is either Bloomberg's third or fourth career. In the previous ones, he was so enormously successful that he was often asked to share his secret for getting ahead. Bloomberg is fond of aphorisms, and the advice he used to dispense consisted of lines like "Always be building," "Do what you love," and "Bring a gun to a knife fight." Just by virtue of winning the election, he has already exceeded what was expected of him politically, and his first hundred days in office have mostly gone smoothly. As mayor, he has made strong appointments, reorganized City Hall, calmed the bond-rating agencies, and reached out to many groups in New York that are not normally considered the constituencies of a Republican billionaire. How he will manage the graver challenges that lie ahead is obviously the central question of the next four years, but it is not one that Bloomberg himself seems in any way troubled by. "He doesn't have self-doubts," Morris Offit, who runs a capital-management firm and is an old friend of the Mayor's, told me. "There's no hand-wringing. It goes back to the trader's mentality: you take a shot, and if you're wrong you go on to the next one."

On an average day, Bloomberg appears at three or four events around the city. One morning not long ago, his first stop was a topping-out ceremony for the huge new AOL Time Warner headquarters, which is rising above Columbus Circle. The project, conceived in a happier, more expansive moment for New York, is also to include condominiums, a Mandarin Oriental hotel, and a new home for Jazz at Lincoln Center. Hundreds of people were milling around the sixth floor of the unfinished building, which, lacking walls, provided a spectacular view of Central Park.

As soon as the Mayor arrived, wearing a gray suit and tasselled loafers, he was ushered to a makeshift stage. He offered his factlet, declaring, not altogether accurately, "Seventy-five years ago next month, there was an American flag raised as part of the topping-out ceremony on the Empire State Building," and added a few upbeat words of praise: "We've really got a wonderful thing for our children, and thank you." Eventually, an American flag went up over the building, while Wynton Marsalis played "Buddy Bolden's Blues," but by that point Bloomberg was already long gone.

"Sure, technique counts, but at some point you've got to trust your criminal instincts."

His next stop was a news conference at One Liberty Plaza, a block north of the World Trade Center site, to announce construction of a temporary pedestrian bridge over West Street. Since September 11th, large sections of lower Manhattan have been effectively isolated, first by the wreckage and now by the cleanup effort. Governor George Pataki was also at the news conference, and so was the State Assembly speaker, Sheldon Silver, whose district happens to include the Trade Center site. While the other two men tried to grapple, not altogether successfully, with the gravity of the occasion, Bloomberg was evidently bored. He rocked back and forth on his heels, and twice had to stifle a yawn. Bloomberg spoke after Pataki, who is six feet five, and when he got to the lectern the microphone was pointing at the middle of his forehead. "Well, I see that this podium was set for the governor's height," he observed dryly.

The day's third event was a celebration of Chinese New Year, out at the public library in Flushing, Queens. Thanks to his policy of not using his police siren, Bloomberg arrived at the library a full hour late, but he received a standing ovation nevertheless. He was introduced by the local city councilman, John Liu, who greeted the crowd in Chinese. Bloomberg began by reading aloud from a proclamation that he had issued on the occasion of the lunar new year, but then broke away.

"Let me just digress for a second and point out to you that in New York City roughly eleven per cent of the population is of Asian extraction," he said. "And John Liu is the first Asian-American to be elected either at a state or a city level." Finally, Bloomberg joked, as he often does, about his own ethnic background. "Happy New Year," he said. "I would love to tell you in Chinese, but John stole my thunder and my accent's not as good. If you want me to do it in Yiddish, I could probably do better."

Bloomberg campaigned for mayor as

Rudy Giuliani's successor—one of his slogans was "New York's Next Step"—and in the last days of the campaign he poured millions of dollars into airing and re-airing a sixty-second ad in which Giuliani all but anointed him. When you're actually following Bloomberg around, however, it's hard to see much connection between the two men. Giuliani loved the theatre of the mayoralty—the rushing to emergencies, the issuing of edicts, the public wrangling and denunciations. Just about any event he appeared at he dominated, partly by virtue of his rhetorical skills but mostly as a result of his monumental certainty in his own moral rectitude.

Bloomberg, by contrast, is the kind of guy who once opened a business meeting with a joke about a nurse who liked to masturbate her patients. Another time, at a sales conference, he is reported to have announced, "I would like nothing more in life than to have Sharon Stone sit on my face." As mayor, he has forgone this approach, but still he resists all forms of pomp, or Giulianiesque sententiousness. Even as he is speaking, the implicit message seems to be that the real work of his mayoralty is taking place somewhere else. Bloomberg is casual to the point of offhandedness—often he is referred to as Mayor Mike, or simply Mike—and he seems altogether uninterested in the dramatic possibilities of office. Not long ago, I heard him address a group of New York City police officers at a charity dinner. "You do something that the rest of us don't have to do," he told them. "And there's no easy way to say thank you other than 'thank you.' "

Bloomberg's last appearance of the day was back in Manhattan, at the Plaza Hotel, at an awards dinner sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York. He arrived at the hotel at around eight-fifteen and was up onstage by eight-twenty-five. The award for community service was going to one of his deputy mayors, Dennis Walcott. "Just as I think the best is yet to come for New York City, I think we're going to get the best out of Dennis in the future," the Mayor said. He congratulated Walcott, and then departed. When the dinner's m.c., Neil Cavuto, of Fox News, got back to the podium, he made a show of searching for Bloomberg in the crowd.

"Did the Mayor leave already?" he asked. "I guess he's on the way to Bermuda."

Bloomberg was born in 1942 on, as he likes to point out, Valentine's Day. Growing up in Medford, Massachusetts, a mostly blue-collar suburb of Boston, he appears to have enjoyed an all-American childhood, as inflected by a kosher home. Bloomberg's father, William, was an accountant for a dairy, and his mother, Charlotte, was a housewife. (Charlotte, who is ninety-three, still lives in the house that the family bought in 1946.) While preparing for his bar mitzvah at the local Conservative synagogue, Bloomberg sold Christmas wreaths door to door to finance summers at Boy Scout camp. The Medford High School yearbook records that in 1960 he was president of the Slide Rule Club. He was also active in the debating society, and was described by classmates as "argumentative."

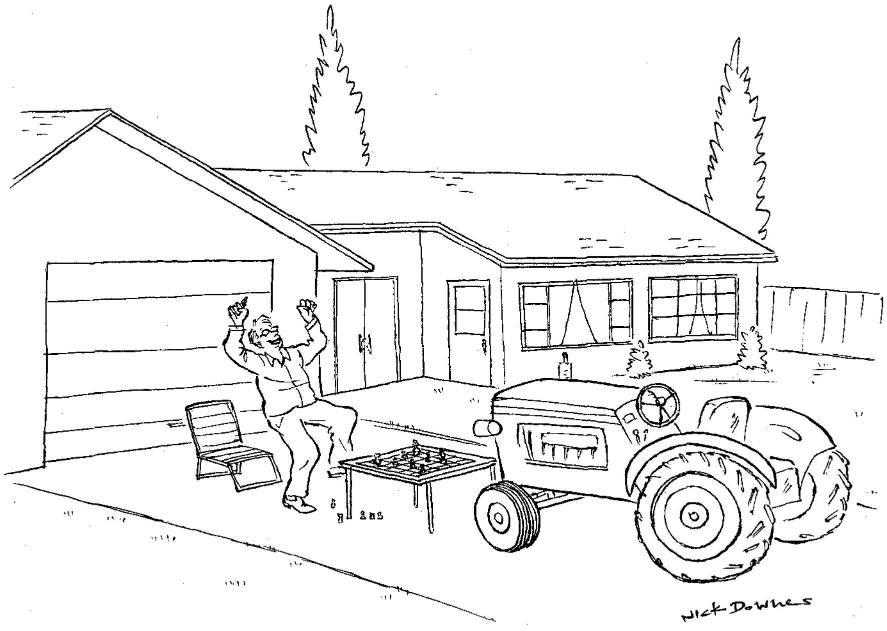
In college, at Johns Hopkins, Bloomberg majored in engineering. He got mainly C's, and was popular. He became one of the first Jewish members of Phi Kappa Psi and, later, president of the university's interfraternity council. Despite his grades, he managed to get into Harvard Business School, where again he failed to make much impact academically. He graduated in the spring of 1966 with no particular plans, expecting, he has said, to get drafted. If the war in Vietnam, or the civil-rights movement, or the Kennedy assassinations, or any of the other extraordinary events of the decade moved Bloomberg in any way, he has never let on. When the draft board classified him 1-Y—he has flat feet—he took a job at Salomon Brothers. It was there that he seems to have discovered himself.

In those days, Salomon was a second- or even third-class firm, not in financial terms but in social ones. It was a trading house, known primarily for its bond business, while the more genteel firms, like Morgan Stanley, were investment-banking houses. (One of Salomon's unofficial mottoes was "Dress British, think Yiddish.") Risk-taking of all sorts was celebrated, and so were most forms of aggression—screaming, cursing, bullying, backstabbing. To succeed on Salomon's trading floor, one of the managing partners once declared, a person had to come to work each morning "ready to bite the ass off a bear."

Everyone at Salomon worked hard, and Bloomberg worked hard to outdo everyone else. His first assignment was in "the cage," an un-air-conditioned bank vault where he stood around in his underwear, counting out stock and bond certificates by hand; his next was filing in the Purchase and Sales Department. He used to get to the office earlier than anyone except the head of the firm, Billy Salomon, and stay later than anyone except Salomon's heir apparent, John Gutfreund. When Gutfreund got into a cab to go home, he would often give Bloomberg a lift.

Bloomberg eventually worked his way onto the equities desk, where he called himself a trader, though really he was a salesman. He specialized in block trades, buying tens or even hundreds of thousands of shares from one institutional client and then turning around and selling them to another. "We could sell anything to anybody," he observes in his 1997 autobiography, "Bloomberg by Bloomberg," referring to himself and the head of Salomon's block-trading operation, Jay Perry. "We just did what all great salespeople do: We presented everything we had, and then highlighted whatever facts enabled customers to convince themselves they were getting a good deal. 'It has a strong specialist behind it,' I'd tell one buyer who might not have the slightest idea why the specialist mattered. . . . 'The chart pattern looks like a breakout,' Perry would declare for those who believed 'The trend's my friend.' " Block trading was at the time a relatively new—and lucrative—enterprise, and Bloomberg loved everything about it: the newness, the riskiness, the money. "I was the fair-haired boy, the block-trading superstar," he writes. "I was the pet of its two top executives. I greeted all important visiting customers, got interviewed by every newspaper that mattered, and had a great social life playing the role of Wall Street power broker to the hilt. More than a 'legend in my own mind.' "

Not everyone at the firm was quite as impressed with Bloomberg as he was. "I'd be shocked if you interviewed people from Salomon if you found anyone who could even tell you what con-



"Once again, man beats machine!"

tribution he made," Richard Grand-Jean, a Bloomberg admirer and former colleague, told me. When Bloomberg rose to partner, in 1972, at the age of thirty, he became the third-ranking man on the equities desk, working under Perry and another legendarily smart—and also legendarily difficult—senior partner, Richard Rosenthal. For several years, the three men engaged in a round-robin power struggle—in one particularly raw moment, Perry dumped the contents of Bloomberg's desk onto the floor while he was off attending a breakfast meeting—until finally, in 1979, Bloomberg lost out. He was forced off the equities desk and given the job of running the firm's information systems. Wall Street was at that point in the very earliest stages of computerization—traders were still working out bond yields on oversized desk-top calculators—and the move was recognized by everyone at the firm as a demotion. "It's the kind of job where, when you hear someone getting it, you're not going to be surprised if two days later they leave," Grand-Jean said. For whatever reason, Bloomberg stayed on. Two years later, he was fired.

Bloomberg has always attributed his dismissal to his candor: he used to declare openly, he says, that he could run the "goddam company" better than Gutfreund. Others explain it in more prosaic terms: Salomon was in the process of merging with Phibro, a publicly traded commodities company, and Bloomberg, as the head of information systems, was not producing any revenue. (When I asked Gutfreund for his version of events, he refused to comment; a few years ago, he told the Boston *Globe* that he did "not intend to engage in fine-tuning the myth of Michael Bloomberg.") Bloomberg claims to have been mostly concerned about how his then wife, Sue Brown, would react to his change in status—the couple, who have two grown daughters, divorced in 1993—and so he paid a visit to a furrier: "A sable jacket seemed to say, 'No sweat. We can still eat. We're still players.' " His next move was to found his own firm.

Bloomberg L.P. has its headquarters in a black glass box of a building on Park Avenue at Fifty-ninth Street. On the ground floor, facing out onto the sidewalk, sixteen screens show fluctuating stock and commodity prices, bond yields, and exchange rates. Inside the lobby, there are six more screens showing much the same information. Upstairs, every receptionist stands behind her own screen, and in every direction there are more screens, big ones and little ones, displaying all Bloomberg, all the time. Even in the ladies' room, there are screens set into the mirrors above the sinks.

Not long ago, I went to the headquarters to get a demonstration of the firm's proprietary data system from a salesman named Ken Napolitano. On my way to meet him, I passed hundreds of cubicles with two and sometimes four computer screens; a food court loaded with fresh fruit and candy; and a zipper display running an announcement in red lights: "Amy Johnston sells four more terminals at American Express to their Equity Research Department." (The Bloomberg system used to be available only over a dedicated terminal; today, it is offered through subscribers' P.C.s.) Napolitano led me into a small conference room that had a large projection screen on one wall and, on the table, a keyboard. Much like a pianist practicing scales, he began with a demonstration of some of the system's basic functions. He looked up some bond prices and, for the fun of it, pulled up some historical data. On January 4, 1955, I learned, the Dow Jones Industrial Average stood at 406.16 points.

Bonds, and more particularly the curious subjectivity involved in pricing them, are at the heart of Bloomberg's business, just as they were at the heart of Salomon's. Many factors affect a bond's value, including the interest rates it offers, the time to maturity, and the going rate for government issues, but since there is nothing like the New York Stock Exchange or Nasdaq for bonds, there is no way to know exactly what a bond is worth. John McConville, the editor of *Inside Market Data*, remembers Bloomberg's recounting to him a conversation he had once had with a bond trader. Bloomberg asked how the price had been set for a particular bond; the trader replied that he had made it up.

The data Bloomberg offers its subscribers are intended to put a limit on such inventiveness. To show me how, Napolitano chose a corporate bond issue from A.T. & T. with a maturity date of May 15, 2025. The first screens he pulled up showed the bond's ratings by Moody's and Standard & Poor's, and its average and current yields compared with those of a treasury note. Next, Napolitano produced a graph showing how telecommunications-company bonds in general stacked up against treasury notes.

Then he pulled up a figure called the "Bloomberg Fair Value" for the A.T. & T. bond, which was based on prices for similar bonds and represented the firm's best estimate of its worth. Napolitano then looked up A.T. & T.'s stock and, clicking through more screens, created a chart showing how it had performed against that of other telecommunications companies. Finally, he performed what is called an "option-adjusted spread analysis," which somehow factored out the risk that the A.T. & T. bond would be called before its maturity date, and allowed its value to be compared directly with that of so-called "bullet" bonds. Napolitano was a good salesman, and as the numbers flashed by, sometimes in spreadsheet form, sometimes as a graph, it was easy to see why someone investing, say, a few billion dollars would consider the service's monthly fee of twelve hundred and eighty-five dollars per workstation money well spent.

Bloomberg's first customers, outside of Merrill Lynch, which still owns a one-fifth stake in his company, were large institutional investors, like pension funds. Initially, the service simply allowed them to make better-informed decisions; later, it began to change the world it was describing. As it became more difficult to exploit customers' ignorance, bond spreads—the gap between what a firm is willing to pay for a particular issue and how much it is asking to sell it—narrowed. This, in turn, cut down on profit margins for traders, meaning that, in a roundabout way, Bloomberg's success came at the expense of the very group of people who had fired him. Bloomberg has always maintained that he came up with the idea for Bloomberg L.P. only after his dismissal, but it is hard to imagine that the notion hadn't at least crossed his mind prior to that. In his last years at Salomon, after all, he had been working on organizing stock and bond data electronically for the firm. "In the eighties, Bloomberg built his business and sold the services he had developed at Salomon back to Salomon," Gutfreund told me. "We paid for it twice. I congratulate him."

In February, 1990, in honor of Bloomberg's forty-eighth birthday, one of his top staff members, Elisabeth DeMarse, put together a book entitled "The Portable Bloomberg." Dedicated to the president of "The Greatest Company in the World," it contained thirty-two pages of his collected "wit and wisdom" and was illustrated with pen-and-ink drawings of Bloomberg in, among other outfits, gladiator gear. In a prefatory note, DeMarse, who is now the president of an Internet consumer-finance firm, Bankrate.com, wrote, "Yes, these are all actual quotes. No, nothing has been embellished or exaggerated. And yes, some things were too outrageous to include."

A lot of "The Portable Bloomberg" consists of off-color jokes, and when *New York* published excerpts last summer, shortly before the mayoral primary, it created a brief sensation. There are quotations on Merry Old England: "There's only one queen in Buckingham Palace, the rest are in Trafalgar Square." On women: "If women wanted to be appreciated for their brains, they'd go to the library instead of Bloomingdale's." And on marriage: "Sex with someone you love . . . is sex with someone you love. The plusses are you don't have to buy dinner and the only thing you catch is calluses." In the section on the Bloomberg terminal, Bloomberg is quoted as saying, "It will do everything, including give you a blowjob. I guess that puts a lot of you girls out of business." On the campaign trail, Bloomberg characterized the remarks as "Borscht Belt jokes" and said he didn't remember having made them.

Also surfacing in the booklet is a business philosophy: "Whenever one of my employees designs a form or writes a memo, I walk out into the hallway and make a big deal of tearing it up. The last thing we need are lots of forms and procedures and policies."

"How do you motivate someone?" Bloomberg is quoted as asking. "Simple. Are they addicted to three meals a day?"

Bloomberg gave up day-to-day responsibility for Bloomberg L.P. last year in order to campaign for mayor. Until then, he ran the firm according to a strong, if quirky, set of management principles—Frederick Taylor meets B. F. Skinner. Bloomberg himself sat at a desk in the middle of a sea of other desks, an arrangement that he called an "open plan." He limited elevator service between floors, so that everyone would have to come in by the same entrance and climb the same stairs, and provided free food, so that his employees would be less inclined to leave the building. There were no titles or individual offices, and anyone who wanted privacy had to reserve a conference room. Bloomberg had these made out of glass. He also had saltwater

"I try to keep my coffee buzz going till the Martini buzz kicks in."

aquariums installed at key locations, because fish, he said, provide "relaxation." (Bloomberg is still awaiting a ruling from the city's Conflicts of Interest Board on his continued ownership of the firm and, theoretically at least, could be told to sell it.)

The "open plan" was intended to inspire teamwork—"You're part of the Borg or you're not" is how one former employee described it—and, at the same time, cut down on pointless formalities. Anybody at the firm could walk right up and speak with Bloomberg; those who were too shy to approach him were likely to bump into him when they were picking up a free bag of Doritos. "He was constantly in touch," Doug McGill, a former London bureau chief for Bloomberg News, told me. "I could literally call him up at any time, and I always got right through to him." Every summer, there was a picnic for the entire staff at Bloomberg's Westchester estate, with a petting zoo for the kids. Bloomberg encouraged his guests to come in T-shirts and shorts, which is what he wore.

The company's strategy was relatively straightforward: offer the best and charge for it. As a matter of principle, Bloomberg never gave volume discounts, and he was constantly adding new features to the data service, which every subscriber was obliged to finance. "I follow the trader's adage: if you can't move something, mark it up, not down," he is quoted as saying in "The Portable Bloomberg." He paid his own employees well and, in return, expected them routinely to put in eleven-hour days. "What you cannot question about this guy is his dedication to high quality and to winning at any cost, or almost any cost," observed Thom Calandra, a former Bloomberg News reporter who is now editor-in-chief of CBS MarketWatch. "He's an overreacher. He's an achiever. And so far nothing he's done has resulted in tragedy."

Throughout the nineties, Bloomberg L.P. expanded rapidly. At the start of the decade, it had ten thousand subscribers and estimated annual revenues of under a hundred and fifty million dollars; by the end, it had a hundred and sixty-four thousand subscribers and annual revenues of $2.3 billion. In the process, it crushed several of its competitors, including Dow Jones's Telerate service. Whether or not Bloomberg himself was entirely responsible for this success—he did not, for example, do any of the technical work—he invariably received all the credit. "When you get hired, you get this whole stack of publicity," Calandra recalled. "Every single article is about Mike Bloomberg. Every article. And it's been like that for ten years. It's all about Mike, and it always has been about him."

Bloomberg played such a big role that even his personality tended to be viewed as corporate policy, including his bluntness. His favorite jokes were of the "What's the difference between pussy and parsley?" variety, and he told them pretty much without regard for who was listening. He freely discussed his own sexual exploits and those—real or imagined—of his employees. At least some of his staff members joined in. Around the office, the phrase "I'd fuck that in a minute" was voiced so routinely that, to save time, it was shortened to "In a minute."

The atmosphere at Bloomberg L.P. was cited in three sex-discrimination suits filed against the firm. One case was brought by a saleswoman, Sekiko Sakai Garrison, who alleged that she had been repeatedly harassed and then forced to leave after complaining about it. Among her accusations was the charge that Bloomberg had greeted the news that she was pregnant with the remark "Kill it!" Bloomberg has denied saying this, and during the mayoral campaign produced the results of a polygraph to back up his assertion; nevertheless, he settled the suit out of court for an undisclosed but by all accounts substantial sum. In a second suit, a saleswoman named Mary Ann Olszewski charged that she had been raped by a colleague while the two were out of town together on a business trip. Eventually, this suit was dismissed, after the plaintiff missed various filing deadlines, but not before Bloomberg had been deposed by her lawyer. An excerpt of the deposition was published in the *Village Voice:*

LAWYER: What would constitute satisfactory proof to you that the allegation was genuine?

BLOOMBERG: I guess an unimpeachable third-party witness.

LAWYER: Do you think that's possible in most instances of date rape?

BLOOMBERG: I don't know whether this was date rape.

LAWYER: Describe for me your conception of how there could be a third-party witness to confirm or deny the truthfulness of her allegations.

BLOOMBERG: There are times when three people are together.

LAWYER: Other than those circumstances when a woman claiming rape was in the presence of more than one man, what other?

BLOOMBERG: Why does it have to be a man?

LAWYER: Have you ever read any psychosocial literature about the subject of rape?

BLOOMBERG: There was a cover story in one of the weekly news magazines last month. I'm sure I glanced through it.

LAWYER: Which one?

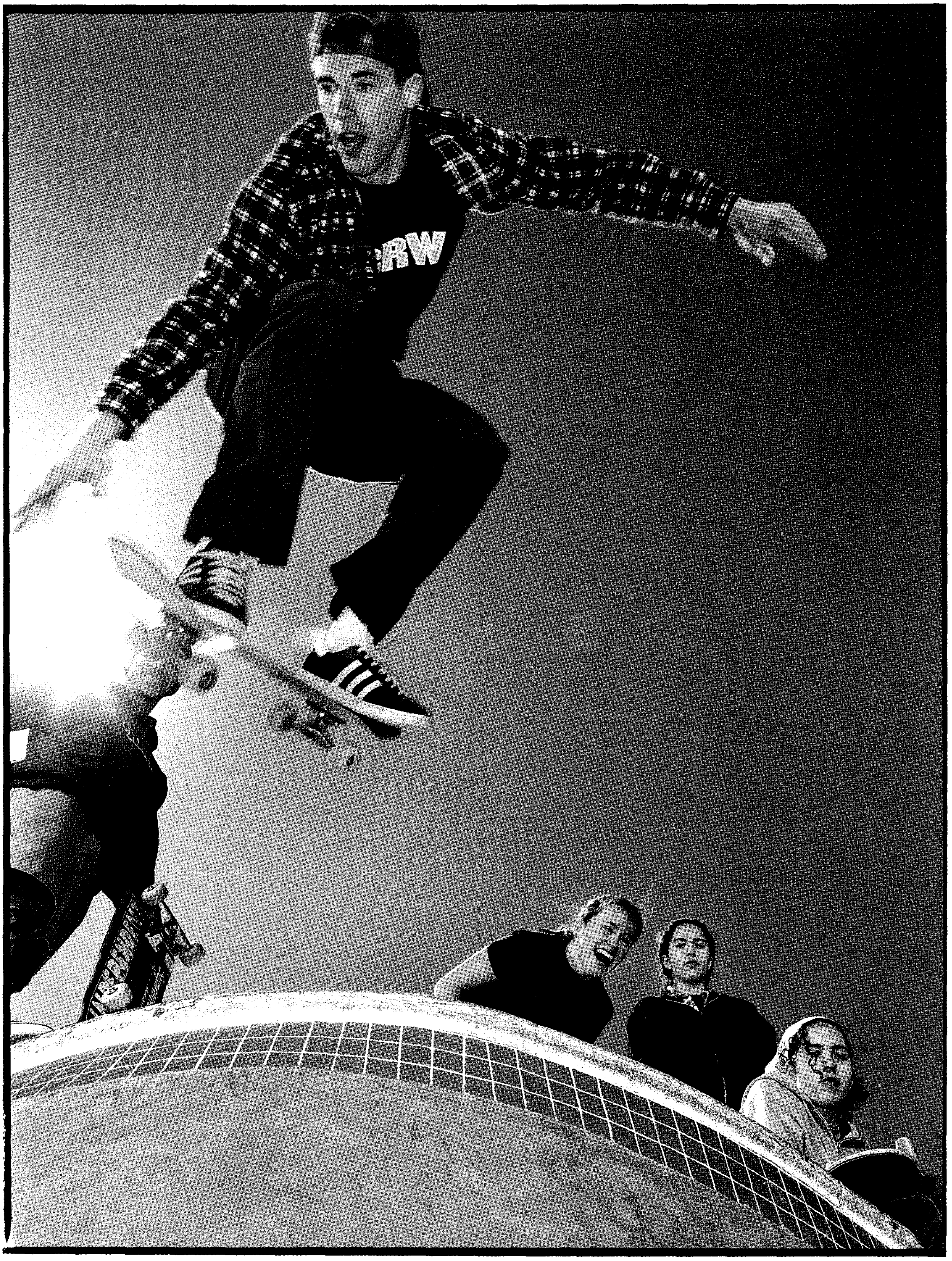
BLOOMBERG: *Time*, *U.S. News*, or *Newsweek*. For all I know, it was all three. They all do the same things.

Bloomberg's budget presentation, in February, was the longest sustained public address of his mayoralty so far, and it wasn't so much an address as a lesson in municipal finance. The Mayor spoke for nearly two hours in City Hall's Blue Room as various charts and graphs were projected on a screen behind him.

"What we're going to do is show you how this next year, fiscal 2003, which starts July 1st, we are going to have a deficit of approximately 4.8 billion dollars," he started off. "Now, whether it's 4.7 or 4.9, 4.6 or 5.0 isn't material. There's no way you can tell exactly. It is very hard to predict the future. And when you talk about whatever gaps we're going to see in 2004 and 2005, you get less and less confidence in the numbers. The economy may get better; the economy may get worse. We may have one-time terrible events like 9/11; we may have nothing but good times. You can't predict."

The Mayor went on, "So we are going to show you how to balance a 4.8 billion-dollar deficit with no new taxes. We are going to have reductions and efficiencies. We are not going to rely on one-time things. We can't rely on one-time shots. We don't have a budget deficit for just 2003. The deficit that we think we're going to have in 2003 is about 4.8 billion dollars; 2004 has a bigger one; 2005 has an even bigger one than that. If you try to balance the budget by one-time shots and postponing your expenses, it is just going to make

CORBIS SABA



PHOTOGRAPHER AT LARGE *The movie "Dogtown and Z-Boys," which opens this month, documents the birth of modern skateboarding, in the drought-emptied pools around Venice, California, in the mid-seventies. New concrete-pool parks, like this one in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, have helped bring skating back to its roots, where style triumphs over stunt. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.*

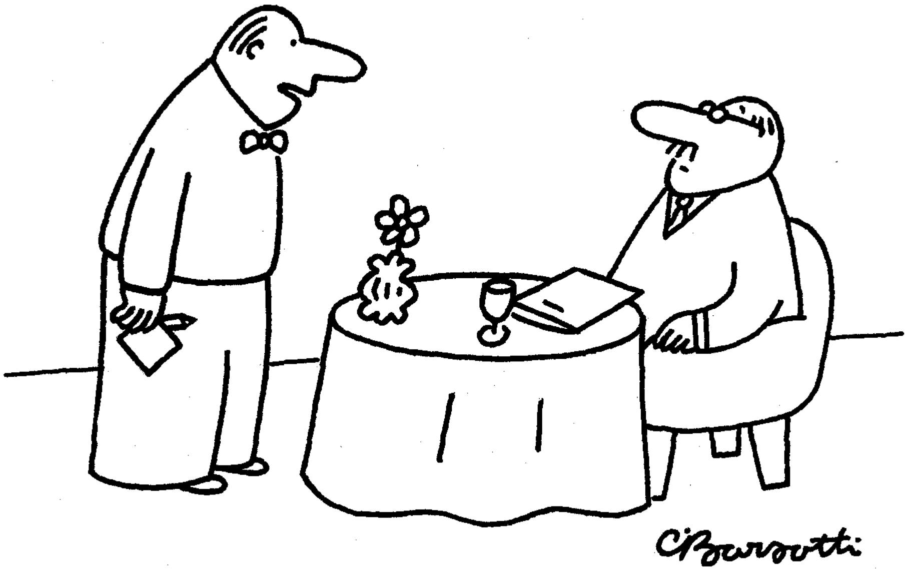
the next year even worse. So we have to face reality."

Bloomberg's preliminary budget was, in fact, somewhat less realistic than he claimed—it included, for example, several projected "savings" of the sort that are never realized, as his own administration later tacitly acknowledged. It also featured a billion and a half dollars in borrowing to cover current operating expenses, a practice that has quite possibly been justified by recent events but that under ordinary circumstances would not be allowed. Still, his budget was much praised, especially for its evenhandedness. The Mayor proposed more or less across-the-board cuts, even in normally hallowed programs like senior citizens' centers. "The budget that we're going to show you hurts everybody," he said. "We don't think it hurts anybody fatally." Except for higher taxes, which he ruled out not so much on philosophical grounds as on practical ones—"You would scare people away and you would scare the rating agencies"—he professed himself willing to consider any reasonable alternatives. "I do not have all the good ideas," he observed. "A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO A BAD-NEWS BUDGET" was the *Times*' assessment.

Bloomberg switched parties before the mayoral election in order to avoid a crowded Democratic primary. The change took place at the last possible moment allowed by New York election law, and it might have caused more controversy had he ever shown an interest in ideology of any sort. In office, Bloomberg has remained strikingly noncommittal. He has appointed his commissioners apparently without regard to political orientation—it is likely that several didn't even vote for him—and, by all accounts, has given them a great deal of latitude. (One told me that the Mayor's instructions to him could be summed up as "It's your agency—don't screw it up.") In contrast to Giuliani, who took his principles so seriously that he didn't speak to anyone he disapproved of, Bloomberg makes a point of meeting with everyone. When, for example, the verdicts against three officers convicted in the Abner Louima case were thrown out, Bloomberg appeared first at the 70th Precinct house, in Flatbush, where the torture had occurred, to show his solidarity with the police. Then, that same afternoon, he went to a black church in Brownsville to show his support for the community that had felt betrayed by the police. On the morning of the St. Patrick's Day Parade, he held a celebratory breakfast at Gracie Mansion, and invited both the parade's organizers and members of a gay group that the organizers had excluded from the parade. Bloomberg has not only visited the Reverend Al Sharpton's headquarters, in Harlem, but he has promised, if invited, to come back every year. "The greatest thing he's done is he's changed the climate of the city so that people are no longer frightened of the mayor," former Mayor Ed Koch told me.

Aptly enough, since he seems to see his primary role as managerial, Bloomberg's inaugural gesture was to rearrange City Hall. He abandoned the traditional executive offices across from the Blue Room and instead installed himself and his deputies, open-plan style, in cubicles upstairs. (He also brought in free food, and fish tanks.) His current priority is winning control over the city's school system, a goal that previous mayors have also pursued, unsuccessfully. Bloomberg maintains that he is ultimately going to win this battle—the final decision rests with Albany—and has already announced his intention to move the school bureaucracy out of its current headquarters, in Brooklyn, and into the Tweed Courthouse, in lower Manhattan. Though the old courthouse has just been renovated, at a cost of ninety million dollars, and had been promised to the Museum of the City of New York, Bloomberg has proposed turning it back into offices, complete with cubicles.

That Bloomberg rarely addresses the emotional or moral complexities of life in the city is, undoubtedly, a rhetorical failure. He seems, at least in public, almost incapable of expressing strong feelings or beliefs, or of eliciting them from others. After the Mayor had delivered a particularly perfunctory address—this one to a group of schoolchildren—I heard one City Hall reporter joke, "It's his thank-you-for-inviting-me speech, which consists of 'Thank you for inviting me.' " At the same time, this limitation is one that, given Bloomberg's priorities, may not be all that significant. As far as he is concerned, the only reason to talk about a problem is to solve it, the corollary of which is that only problems that can be solved are really worth talking about. "I am going to show you how we got into this situation," the Mayor said matter-of-factly when he presented his budget, "and a solution to work our ways out of this situation."

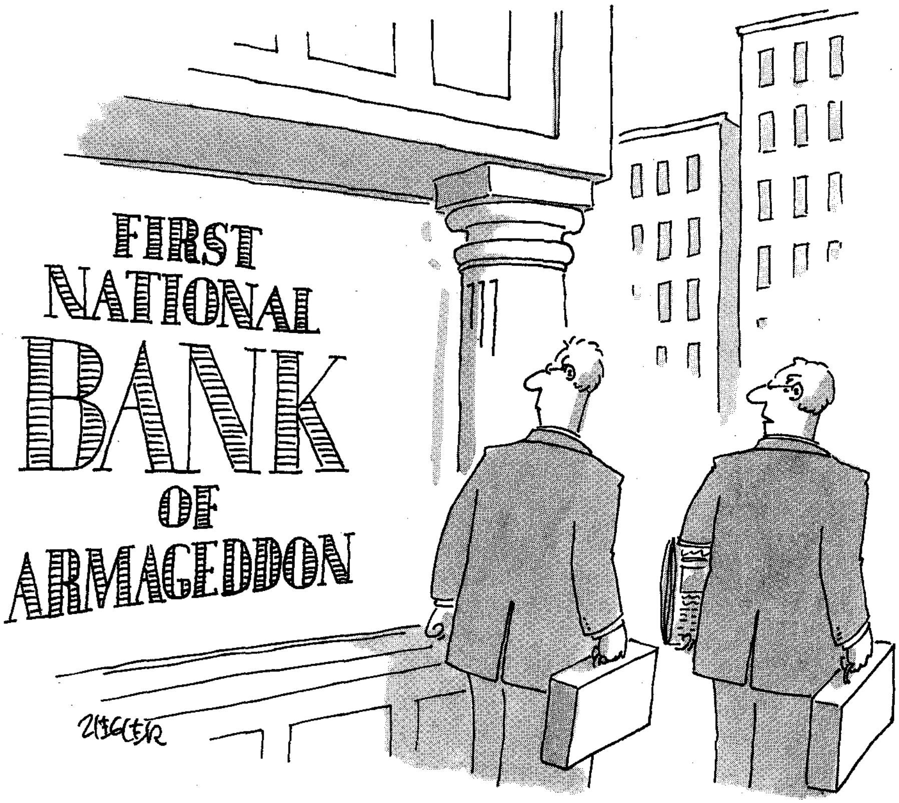


"The chef said all the regular stuff is as special as it's going to get today."

Every year, the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association holds a benefit in New York to support, among other programs, the group's national convention, its style book on gay and lesbian terminology, and its student-outreach effort. This year, Bloomberg L.P. was one of the event's "gold level" sponsors, and the Mayor was a featured speaker at the cocktail reception, which took place at the offices of MTV, in Times Square.

Often, Bloomberg is described as a "media mogul," and this is at least partially accurate. In addition to the financial-data service, which generates nearly all the firm's profits, Bloomberg L.P. comprises a wire service, Bloomberg News; Bloomberg Television; Bloomberg Radio; and a consumer-magazine division, which publishes titles like *Bloomberg Markets*, *Bloomberg Wealth Manager*, and *Bloomberg Personal Finance*. (The company also has a books division, which publishes, among other things, *New Yorker* cartoon collections.) All in all, the firm employs seventeen hundred journalists in eighty-five bureaus around the world, and at the cocktail reception several Bloomberg reporters were in attendance. "Thank you for having me," the Mayor told the journalists, who were gathered at little round tables. "I was here last year. Since then I have come out of the closet. It's true. I have finally admitted that I'm a Republican. And the press has cut me a lot of slack since then, particularly on weekends. They really do leave me alone."

Speaking, as usual, without notes, he continued, "Oscar Wilde once said we are dominated by journalism. And that is both the good news and the bad news. The good news is that journalism is what keeps us a free society. If it wasn't for a free, aggressive, investigatory press, we really would have totalitarianism, and we should never forget that, no matter how many times we get annoyed with the press for intrusiveness, or whatever. And I do think sometimes, and this is my personal experience—you have a right to ask, but the great thing about the First Amendment is I have a right not to answer. You have a right to write it; I have a right not to read it. And that was the way I got through my campaign. I basically said I wasn't going to read any of this stuff anymore, and it's amazing, if you don't read it, life goes on." He concluded, "Anyways, congratulations to all of you."


FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF ARMAGEDDON
ZIEGLER

"Uh-oh."

* * *

In general, Bloomberg has a hard time masking his feelings toward the journalists who now trail him. Not long ago, he went record shopping, to demonstrate his support for merchants in lower Manhattan, and flipped through a rack of CDs as the cameras clicked away furiously. I happened to be standing nearby when he muttered, to no one in particular, "The dumbest things in the world, they're taking pictures of." (He bought two CDs by Crosby, Stills and Nash.) On another occasion, he was heading into a routine press conference at a Manhattan middle school when he ran into someone he knew. "You're not joining this gaggle!" he exclaimed.

Doubtless it *is* aggravating to be covered by the New York press, and while Bloomberg has been widely praised for his budget, his appointments, and his restructuring of City Hall, he has also been taunted. The first time he suddenly dropped out of view for the weekend without letting reporters know his whereabouts, the *Post* ran a picture of a milk carton with his face on it, asking "HAVE YOU SEEN ME?" The next weekend he disappeared, a *Post* photographer showed up at the home of the deputy mayor for operations, Marc Shaw, in Queens. The paper ran a picture of a dishevelled-looking Shaw, who appeared at the door in jeans and a T-shirt, above a caption identifying him as "the man in charge when the mayor's gone." The conceit was then picked up by David Letterman, who broadcast Shaw's photograph as the lead-in to a Top Ten list of the "Ways New York City Is Different When This Guy's in Charge." No. 1: "First city official since Koch to take a leak in the Hudson."

Yet Bloomberg's disdain for the press clearly goes beyond the missing-person gags. "If I had a heart attack in the sales department, everyone would come around and immediately give me CPR," he once announced to a group of reporters at Bloomberg L.P. "If I had a heart attack in the newsroom, you assholes would stand around and scribble notes." During the mayoral race, I asked him for his reflections on the campaign, and his response was to reflect on the stupidity of reporters. "I

LOWEST EBB • LILLIAN FADERMAN

TAKE IT ALL OFF

In 1956, I was in the tenth grade. I'd been determined to be a movie star since I was six, when, in our small room in the Bronx, I would see my immigrant mother looking broken after long days draping dresses in a sweatshop. "Save me from the shop," she said, and sighed. Now in L.A., taking night classes at Geller Theatre and School of Dramatic Arts, I realized I'd get nowhere in Hollywood unless I had a nose job. I needed money.

"I know this photographer who shoots pinup for a hobby," a man at Geller's told me. "Pays good." I'd seen pictures of Betty Grable in a backless bathing suit, flirting with the camera.

The windows of Wes Martin's studio were adorned with glowing brides in miles of swirled white satin. "My name is Gigi Frost," I told him. That sounded like a pinup model.

"O.K.," "O.K.," "O.K.," he said to each new pose I struck with his umbrellas and scarves and ukuleles. "Now can we take just a few figure shots?"

I didn't understand.

His pale cheeks became pink. " 'Figure' means 'nude,' no clothes."

He wanted me to take my clothes off in front of him? What if my mother saw nude pictures of me? But how would she ever see them?

The air felt cold when I stood on the huge sheet of heavy background paper. But, as the bright lights warmed my nipples and belly, my teeth stopped their little castanet clacks. "Good job, good job," he said, still entirely businesslike, as I did my poses.

He put me in touch with another photographer, Mario Parma. Fifty dollars a day, Parma promised—almost as much as my stepfather earned in a whole week. Parma did spreads for magazines with names like *King* and *Champagne*. I'd seen pimply-faced boys and round-shouldered old men leafing through them at Hollywood Boulevard newsstands. But my mother read only the *Forward*, which she bought in little Jewish grocery stores.

Parma let me schedule the shoot for the Monday before Easter. I never told him the reason I wanted to do it then was that I'd be out of school. One day of work with Mario Parma turned into a second, and then a third and a fourth. Two hundred dollars for four days of work! It was a fortune! Oh, the heft in my hand of twenty new and crisp and green and lovely ten-dollar bills.

Yet another photographer in the trade wanted me for a shoot with a model named Crissy Cross, a pert redhead who just missed being pretty by her rabbity front teeth.

"Gimme a couple minutes to set up the lights," he said when I arrived. "My office doubles as a dressing room, so you can change in there."

As I folded my capri pants over a chair, I couldn't help seeing a note that he'd scribbled on a desk pad that stuck out from under the telephone. *Gigi Frost great figure bad face.* Someone must have told him that over the phone.

"You'll do real good for about three months," Crissy said when the shoot was over. "They're always interested in a new bod, but once your picture comes out in a lot of magazines that's the end of it." And she had another warning: "Never let those creeps take beaver shots. They're not supposed to, but they like to try, and then they sell them illegally."

At Geller's, I had only one close friend, Simone, a rich girl who'd made me over from her own glamorous wardrobe. "How come we never get together on weekends anymore?" she complained when she drove me home from rehearsal one night. "You got a boyfriend?"

ADRIAN TOMINE

We sat in her car. I offered her one of my cigarettes. "I'm working a lot on the weekends. I have modelling jobs." I lit us both up.

"That's terrific," she said. "In a store, or what?"

"No, for photographers. I do pinup and figure."

Her huge lashes fluttered. "What's figure?"

It was too late to hold back now. "You know, nude modelling." I coughed in the smoky closed car.

"You model nude?" She stared.

"Yes."

"In front of men?" Her voice rose to an outraged squeak. "I think that's terrible. Naked in front of strange men?" She tapped her cigarette out angrily in the pink lacquered ashtray. "What about morals?"

I jerked back, like she'd slapped me. What did she know about it anyway, about anything, with her canopied bed and a million dolls left over from when she was a kid? She didn't know a thing about the hunger I'd felt my whole life. I had to bite my lip to keep from lashing out; she'd been good to me. All I said was "I need the money." ♦

don't know whether it's just that they're not all that smart, or maybe they just don't think it sells," he told me. "But there is a focus on finding something wrong."

His own media empire notwithstanding, Bloomberg clearly doesn't like to focus on what is wrong. In my conversations with his associates, a recurrent theme was his lack of interest in any kind of self-criticism, or even analysis. This quality, several friends of his insisted, was essential to his success. "In his own mind, he really doesn't feel there's anything that he can't accomplish," Morris Offit told me. "He has these God-given talents—why not take advantage of them? It's very straightforward. If someone told me that Michael was getting some kind of therapy, I'd be the most surprised person in the world."

Matthew Winkler is the editor-in-chief of Bloomberg News and wrote Bloomberg's autobiography with him. He told me that during their collaboration Bloomberg kept trying to add exclamation points to the manuscript. "He's his own hero," Winkler said of his old boss. "As a result, he doesn't have to be that introspective. Life is a series of goals to be achieved. He defines the goals and then does everything he can to achieve them." He went on, "So it's relatively uncomplicated, and that's why it works. That's why *he* works—because he doesn't spend a lot of time wondering if it's all meaningless."

Bloomberg devotes the last chapter of his autobiography to philanthropy. Entitled "Wealth, Wisdom, and Work," it reads like a self-help manual for the fantastically wealthy. "After you've gotten used to living like a king, what do you do?" Bloomberg asks at one point. "First, forget worrying over taxes," he answers. "Second, don't spoil your family. . . . Third, be selfish! Buy yourself enormous pleasure. Give most of your wealth to charity!"

Bloomberg has been enormously generous, contributing to everything from his mother's synagogue, in Medford, to the Harlem Opera. A list of donations released by his campaign last summer showed that in the previous twelve-month period he had made gifts totalling more than a hundred million dollars to nearly six hundred groups. Though he is not much of a museumgoer, and by his own account sleeps at the opera, he was until recently on the board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and of Lincoln Center. (Bloomberg himself underwrote the museum's renovation of its arms-and-armor gallery, and his company underwrote Lincoln Center's summer season.) Bloomberg has even endowed a fellowship at Harvard for the professional study of giving. "Every two years this 'chair' passes from one school at Harvard to another," he writes. "And so, every twenty-four months, a new person will study, teach, research, and write from a new perspective about my interest, philanthropy. Will they make great contributions to society? You bet. Will there be great leverage to continue the work I love by teaching many? For sure. Will my family get enjoyment, satisfaction, admiration? Absolutely."

Bloomberg's view of philanthropy—upbeat and uncomplicated—matches, perhaps not surprisingly, his view of himself. Giving to others is not about guilt, or ethical obligation, or even identification with those who are suffering; it is, rather, another form of self-realization—in his words, "the greatest satisfaction available for cash today." Even as he was preparing to run for mayor last spring, Bloomberg was quietly at work on his most ambitious philanthropic project to date. The Mayor is the chairman of the board of trustees of Johns Hopkins, his alma mater, and for years has been a major benefactor of the university. His largest donations have been to Hopkins' school of public health, which is now named after him. Last year, he held a series of discussions with the school's dean, Dr. Alfred Sommer, in which he expressed interest in making a further contribution to public health that would change the world. Sommer travelled to New York with half a dozen other eminent research scientists from Hopkins. The group stayed at the Algonquin and sat at the "round table" trying to come up with a proposal. When the scientists presented their ideas to Bloomberg in a conference room at Bloomberg L.P., none of their suggestions seemed to him quite big enough—except for one, which was to eliminate a deadly disease. Sommer declined to specify which disease, but last May, Johns Hopkins announced an anonymous hundred-million-dollar gift to set up a malaria research institute.

"Wouldn't it be great to say you saved more lives than anybody in the history of the world?" Bloomberg asked shortly before the institute was announced. Six months later, he made another anonymous donation, of ten million dollars, to the Carnegie Corporation, to assist cultural institutions hurt by the September 11th attack.

A hundred days into his mayoralty, Bloomberg is still introduced as someone who did not need to run for office, and clearly this is the case. He already had a great life. "Let me put it this way," he once said. "I am a single, straight billionaire in Manhattan. What do you think? It's a wet dream." New York, meanwhile, even before September 11th, was headed toward hard times. In the months since the attack, ninety-eight thousand jobs have left the city, many of them never to return, and the very future of downtown as the world's financial center has been cast in doubt.

Bloomberg didn't run for mayor despite the difficulties of the job but, one has to assume, because of them. He has always been drawn to new challenges, to munificent gestures, and to danger. "Did I want to risk an embarrassing and costly failure?" he once observed about his decision to start Bloomberg L.P. "Absolutely."

While he was still at Salomon Brothers, Bloomberg took up flying. One weekend, he set off up the Connecticut coast in a rented helicopter. He was just off of Norwalk, over a tiny island in Long Island Sound, when his engine conked out. Black smoke filled the cockpit, and the helicopter began to tumble out of the sky. Bloomberg just barely managed to maneuver it onto the island, the tail dangling over the water, and bail out. More recently, when Bloomberg was taking his nephew on a sightseeing flight to Manhattan, a propeller on his private airplane failed. He was forced to make an emergency landing at Westchester Airport, but, as he later informed his sister, any landing you walk away from is a good one. ♦

ANNALS OF CRIME

THE ADMIRAL AND THE CON MAN

How a sixteenth-century fortune inspired America's greatest fraud.

BY RICHARD RAYNER

Confidence tricks never die. They flourish, fade, and then spring back to life. They're like fairy tales, repeating themselves in proven formulas. The unclaimed-estate swindle is one of the oldest forms of con, and it goes something like this: I, the con man, have privileged access to a very valuable asset that is locked up in probate or in some distant land, and I would like from you a small contribution to help with my legal expenses while I secure the release of this fortune; if you're smart enough to come in with me, you'll be rewarded bountifully. These days, the con might be the unreleased recordings of Marvin Gaye, or millions of dollars that are frozen in Nigeria. But the high summer of the estate swindle was in the first decades of the last century, and its foremost practitioner was the now forgotten Oscar Hartzell, one of history's most fabulous confidence tricksters.

I came across Oscar Hartzell in "Hustlers and Con Men," a history of swindles published twenty-five years ago by a crime encyclopedist named Jay Robert Nash, which briefly brought Hartzell and his con, the Sir Francis Drake estate, out of obscurity. Nash's seventeen-page telling of the Hartzell story—of an Iowa farm boy who restyled himself as a British lord in London while swindling seventy thousand or more Midwesterners—drew me in at once, because it seemed so rich and extravagant, the story of the manufacture and doomed pursuit of an illusion, like "The Maltese Falcon." At the same time, Nash's version was sketchy, relying largely on secondary accounts, and I wondered what might exist in the way of primary sources.

My own father was a con man, a charming rogue who, among other crimes and deceptions, some petty, some more ambitious, contrived to sell a large number of motor cars that did not belong to him and then fled with the proceeds, vanishing abroad (to South Africa, I later learned), where he bought himself a new identity that lasted until the money ran out. This was in the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, when I was a child in England, and I knew that such a life leaves more evidence and wreckage than Nash needed for the purposes of his book. There would always be a paper trail.

In time, I discovered that Scotland Yard had a file on Oscar Hartzell, which had been closed under the British Official Secrets Act. I applied to have it opened, and was eventually handed three big folders, bound in ribbon, that contained detective reports, witness statements, newspaper clippings, and a chronology of Hartzell's life in England. In America, there was even more material: transcripts of two trials, running to thousands of pages, several boxes of State Department papers, transcripts of Post Office hearings, and court records of disbarment and bankruptcy. His Bureau of Prisons records were filed under the pleasing category "Notorious Offenders" in the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. They contained several weeks' worth of psychiatric interviews and, most remarkable, an autobiography that a prison psychiatrist had encouraged Hartzell to write in 1936.

"Lincoln or any prominent man you've ever heard of has got nothing on me as far as starting at the bottom. I've had quite a career, doctor," Hartzell told the psychiatrist. Reading these crumbling, typed pages, I had the sensation that Hartzell had walked through the door. I began to think I'd stumbled upon a lost saga, a tale of romantic individualism and capitalism gone awry, of money and duplicity mixed together to the point of madness.

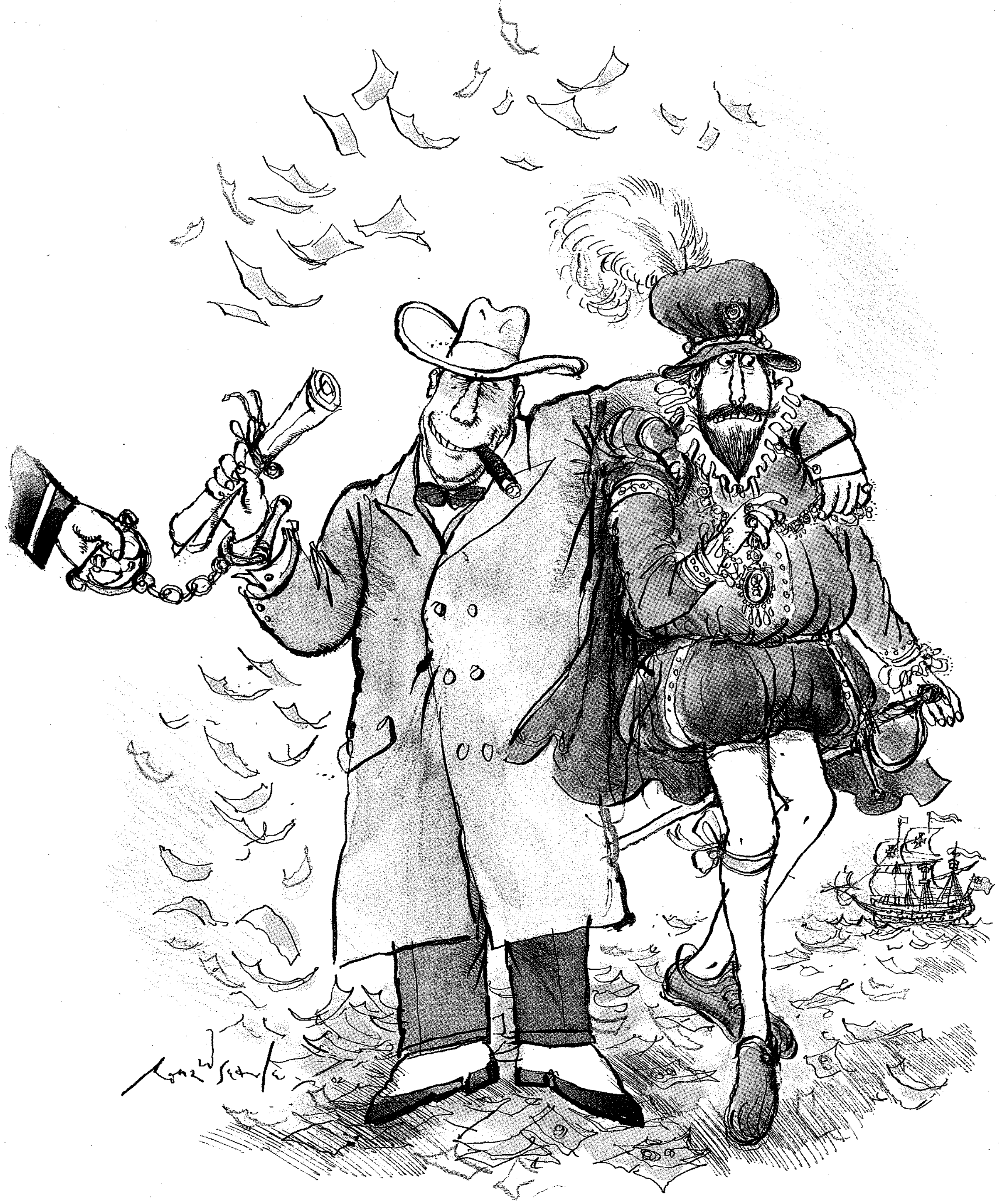
Oscar Merrill Hartzell was born on January 6, 1876, in an Illinois prairie town, the son of churchgoing parents who grew corn and raised hogs on twenty acres. He left school at the age of fifteen, intending to become a farmer. He was dark-haired, ruddy-cheeked, thickset, not tall, but an imposing physical presence. He had a temper, and a vivid flair for what he termed "cattle-pasture language," and from the start he seems to have seen himself, quite unironically, as the hero in a Horatio Alger story, destined for greatness.

At nineteen, he made an advantageous marriage, to Daisy Rees, the daughter of a local farmer, and they bought two hundred acres of their own. Four years later, he sold the land at a profit and bought more than a thousand acres in Madison County, Iowa, where he became one of the biggest shippers of horses and cattle. After his father died, in a hunting accident in 1905, Hartzell received an insurance payout and bought sixteen thousand acres in Texas, going into the cattle game on a grand scale. But his cattle developed a fever, known as the Texas itch, and this was the first in a string of mishaps that forced him into bankruptcy; he and his wife lost their farm and their home. A real-estate business failed, too, as did his campaign for sheriff in Polk County, Iowa, on the Democratic ticket, in 1914. By 1915, Hartzell was almost forty years old, and he saw only ruin.

Then he heard from his mother, who had invested some six thousand dollars in a business venture that she thought looked promising. Hartzell went back to Illinois, where he heard of a man whose heroic life, he came to believe, foreshadowed his own.

The great admiral Sir Francis Drake was also the son of a farmer. He rose to fame and a title, living a life of dash and danger—a very Elizabethan life, which, in its meteoric trajectory, now seems more American than English.

Oscar Hartzell told donors that his claim to the Drake billions had caused panic at the highest levels of the British government.



RONALD SEARLE

In 1588, he helped to defeat the Spanish Armada. Eight years earlier, he completed the first British circumnavigation of the globe, and came home with the booty he had seized from Spanish treasure ships and outposts along the way—a fabled haul of gold pesos, silver bars, silks, porcelain, pearls, and spices. On his arrival at Plymouth, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. With his share of the treasure, Drake bought a large country seat, Buckland Abbey, in Devon, and set about forgetting his humble origins. Many at court considered him a jumped-up braggart, but the Queen liked Drake, or at least she appreciated his value as a sailor and privateer whose bravery seemed at times to transcend sanity. Drake died in 1596. He had no children, and most of his wealth went to his brother and his wife. He was already a legend, and, after his death, improbable stories began to circulate about him.

One such story was that Drake's will

was invalid, and might even have been forged. The idea was that Drake's fortune was waiting for the person who could untie the legal knot, and it proved curiously persistent. In 1892, the Minister to Great Britain, Robert Todd Lincoln, a son of the President who had once said, "You can fool some of the people all of the time," issued a statement warning investors to avoid anyone claiming to represent the so-called Sir Francis Drake estate.

By 1900, Drake promoters were appearing in the Midwest, at first calling on only those named Drake but gradually widening the offer. The most successful of them was a woman named Sudie Whittaker, a slender, dark-haired widow in her mid-thirties. Her story was that the rightful heir to the Drake fortune had immigrated to America in the eighteenth century, and the line of descent could be traced to a George Drake, of Rocheport, Missouri, who, as it happened, was a cousin of hers. (Whittaker had an impressive document entitled "Genealogical Report on the Claim to the Drake Estates," prepared by a London genealogist named Rundle U. Upham.) George Drake had given her power of attorney to establish his claim to the fortune, she said, and she was prepared to sell a limited number of shares in the estate, or "sub-contracts," to cover her legal expenses while she pursued the matter in the British courts. With compound interest, the total value of the estate was more than ten billion dollars. She promised a return of five hundred to one, or even a thousand to one, making a Drake investment sound a lot like some business offerings of the late nineteen-nineties—too good to be true but, on the other hand, possibly too good to miss.

"Mrs. Whittaker was a very artful woman, capable of using the truth with greatest economy in her schemes to obtain money, and a Jesabel when she got their money," a psychiatrist who reviewed the case in 1936 wrote. Sudie Whittaker was a subtle and ruthless schemer, and she and her two sons lived comfortably off the Drake scam for years. It was Whittaker who had persuaded Hartzell's mother, Emma, to invest, and who took pity on the bankrupt Hartzell and gave him a job.

"I got very much interested and enthused in the matter," Hartzell later said. He elected to take his salary in shares—he was, in the parlance of the con, "on the outside"—and he toured the Midwest with Whittaker. In the summer of 1915, she collected sixty-five thousand dollars in Des Moines. A judge, a county clerk, a justice of the peace, and leading society women were among the investors. But then there was a hitch. Whittaker had promised a payout of a hundred thousand dollars to one William A. Alstrand, who had put fifty dollars into the scheme. Alstrand got tired of waiting for his money and had Whittaker indicted before a grand jury on charges of fraud.

"It's such a bummer, but it looks like I'll have to work for the next thirty or forty years."

Her lawyer, Milo Lewis, came down from Chicago and secured her release. She was summoned to appear in court again, but by the beginning of 1916 she and Lewis had left for England, braving the Kaiser's U-boats and the winter Atlantic storms. Lewis's second wife and one of Whittaker's sons travelled with them, and so did Hartzell. Whittaker and Lewis were under the impression that they were taking Hartzell along as an employee, little better than a servant, but he harbored bigger dreams than either of them imagined.

Hartzell's first British immigration card, now in his Scotland Yard file, shows that the Americans docked at Southampton on January 3, 1916. They took the train to London, and checked into the Hyde Park hotel. Milo Lewis, having saved Whittaker in Des Moines, now exacted a price. The handsome, ambitious Lewis was to lead the Drake scheme. All revenues would flow directly to him. Whittaker would now be employed by him, on a small salary plus commission.

Whittaker unhappily agreed but continued to arrange with her people in America that the Drake money be sent to her. Lewis assigned Hartzell to watch her, and when the group moved into rented apartments Hartzell was ordered to live with her and her son. It was a humiliating business, and Hartzell later described those early months in London as the worst of his life. Whittaker bossed him around and made him run errands. Lewis kept him in the dark about the business and on a short economic leash. For a while, Hartzell and his wife, Daisy, exchanged letters, but then he stopped writing and she filed for divorce on the ground of desertion. Meanwhile, Hartzell was beginning to discover that Whittaker and Lewis were crooks and that their Drake enterprise was a fraud. In 1936, he told the prison psychiatrist that he saw them fabricating Bibles and forging parchments. A fake tombstone was smuggled into a Plymouth graveyard so that it could be photographed as evidence. But, rather than turning in the wrongdoers, he followed suit: he had seen Lewis take control from Whittaker, and he decided on his own act of piracy. He would steal the con for himself.

He had to wait until 1922. The Chicago Bar Association had been trying to disbar Milo Lewis, and that year hearings took place before the Supreme Court of Illinois. Lewis returned to America to defend himself against two separate charges: first, that he was fraudulently inducing people to invest money in the bogus estate of Sir Francis Drake; and, second, that he had violated an arcane Illinois marital rule. On the first charge, an investigator appointed by the court said that the venture appeared to be "a chase after a phantom" but went no further. Little sympathy, however, was shown toward Lewis's complicated matrimonial arrangements. It turned out that he'd married his second wife only five months after divorcing his first wife, and this violated Illinois law. And, by the time of the hearing, he'd discarded his second wife and married for a third time. The court's investigator said, "He seemed more concerned in keeping himself much married than in keeping within the law."

Lewis was disbarred, and the court's findings—that the Drake estate might be a phantom but that Milo Lewis was certainly a scoundrel—couldn't have been more convenient for Hartzell.

A con man sells something that isn't his, like the fleet of Austin Minis that my father sold, or the Eiffel Tower, which Victor Lustig sold twice in the nineteen-twenties—saying that he had been authorized to offload the structure for scrap. Or he sells something that isn't worth what he says it's worth—a stock whose value he has contrived illegally to inflate, or a fake Vermeer like the one Han van Meegeren sold to Hermann Göring. Or he sells appearance as reality. When Enron executives ordered seventy-five employees onto an empty trading floor and, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported, "told them to act as if they were trying to sell energy contracts to businesses over the phone," to impress a group of visiting Wall Street analysts, the executives were unwittingly replicating another classic con—the "big store," a fake betting shop or gambling den. Or he sells something that doesn't exist, like the Drake estate.

In 1922, Hartzell plied his pen in the Visitors' Writing Room at the London offices of the Chicago *Daily News*, seeking to convince the Drake investors in America that he was now in charge. His blunt cattleman's tone was an asset; he was enraged and full of conviction.

"Remember, I have been running with a very bad crowd," he wrote to John Owen, an English émigré, who worked as an insurance adjuster in Des Moines, asking Owen to read this letter, and future ones, at secret gatherings of the Drakers before handing them to Hartzell's mother for safekeeping. In time, these letters came to be regarded as totems of wisdom, almost as sacred texts.

"I have been travelling with the lowest down, most unprincipled crooks on earth," Hartzell wrote in one letter. "An automobile couldn't haul the criminal records connected with that outfit." Milo Lewis, he alleged, had fathered a child with a blacksmith's daughter. And there was more: "You will not believe it but there is another woman that has six children by him. Hell's just a poppin! The records in the end will show a score of illegitimate children that belong to Lewis."

You will not believe it. The essence of the con man's skill is to make you believe it anyway. Hartzell started from the reasonable assumption that the Midwestern investors were very angry to learn that thousands of their hard-won dollars had merely bankrolled Milo Lewis's sexual adventures. "He will go to jail for the rest of his life when the crash comes for he has not been square with the people," Hartzell wrote. He accused Whittaker and Lewis of perjury, forgery, bribery, and fraud.

For a while, there was confusion among the investors in Iowa and Illinois, and contention in London. Hartzell and Lewis got into a fight outside the American Express offices in the Haymarket, and Lewis and Whittaker brought suit against Hartzell for libel. This was a miscalculation. He enjoyed being in court and was good at it, Daisy Hartzell said later. He arrived with a topflight London barrister, a certified copy of Lewis's disbarment proceedings, newspaper clippings concerning Sudie Whittaker's grand-jury indictment of 1915, and various examples of the phony Drake share certificates they'd sold him.

Hartzell reported in a letter to John Owen, "When Lewis's barrister saw all this staring him in the face all you could hear was 'Ba-ba-ba, stop-stop-stop.' "

Whittaker and Lewis lost the case. Hartzell could now present himself to his American audience as Honest Oscar, the straight shooter. He said he had hired a new team of lawyers, "as good legal talent as there is in England whose standing and reputation and character is spotless . . . and they have been going over the ground from Sir Francis Drake's death, quietly, neatly, and tactfully." He promised his investors that he would always be "square with the people." And he reminded them that now "O. M. Hartzell is top dog."

Still, to cut Whittaker and Lewis out of the scam entirely, Hartzell would have to reinvent it. He wrote to an old friend and local doctor in Iowa, Charles Cochran, describing what had happened to him in London in recent months. He'd been befriended by a nun, he said, and she had told him about the existence of a secret, suppressed will, and had promised to help him find it. He was to join her for morning service at a church in Devon and watch her. He noticed that the nun frequently raised her glance upward. That Sunday, at midnight, he climbed the stairs to the belfry, where, delving among old papers covered inches deep in dust, he found what he was looking for.

He had discovered documents "proving that Sir Francis Drake had a son," Cochran later told a reporter. "And Hartzell established the fact that this son was Drake's heir." He traced the line down to Colonel Drexel Drake, in London. There was, Hartzell could now claim, a whole new Drake lineage, an heir with no connection to any previous claimant.

On April 25, 1924, he wrote to a Des Moines attorney, I. T. Jones, who was handling his American legal affairs, explaining that the will was being authenticated: "My genealogy was presented to the Crown Commission which is the highest in the British Empire and the only and last place that a case of this kind can be finished and their decision is final and cannot be attacked in the courts or by anybody and after they have finished up on the matter it is finished forever."

There was, of course, no such thing as Hartzell's Crown Commission. (He also invented a Lord & King's Commission.) Colonel Drexel Drake did not exist. And Hartzell had made no application to a British court. The eighteen-page letter was a swirl of fantasy, fact, and obfuscation. But its crucial point was this: "Everything has been transferred, signed, sealed by the heir to myself," Hartzell told Jones. When the Drake estate was settled, the jewels, the lands, the treasure, the gold, the investments would all proceed to him. And why had Colonel Drake made a gesture of such extraordinary generosity? Because Colonel Drake's niece—Lady Curzon—had fallen in love with him; they were to be married.

There was no need for anyone in America to be concerned about the historical and genealogical details that Whittaker and Lewis had carefully assembled. Oscar Merrill Hartzell was going to get everything. And everything was going to be an awful lot of money:

> Figure up all the land in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa at an average of $125 an acre, and all of the stocks, and all the bank deposits, all the railroads and cities in those three states and add them together and the combined amount would not be as large as the Sir Francis Drake estate here in England, of which I am the sole owner, and to which I hold the sole title, which the British parliament is now conveying to me in cash, and which I am going to bring to America to distribute among the men and women who have advanced me money with which to carry on the fight to win this estate.
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> When I get this money, and I expect to get it in the summer, I could buy the three states of Missouri, Kansas and Iowa, every foot of land and every dollar's worth of property in them, and put a fence around the whole lot and then have more gold left over than all of you ever dreamed of.

Hartzell returned to America briefly in the early twenties. According to court testimony given later by his brother Clinton, Hartzell met with him and two other siblings, his sister Pearl and his other brother, Canfield, and invited them to come in on the deal. "It's easy money," he said. Clinton left, warning his siblings that they'd all end up in jail.

This is the first of only two recorded instances of Hartzell's admitting that the Drake estate was a chimera. On this occasion he did so deliberately, and at once went back to the business of making his fabrications seem real. He visited Des Moines, where he found that the struggle for power with Whittaker and Lewis had actually heightened enthusiasm for the scheme. These people had been fighting, the reasoning went, so they must have been fighting about something.

He appointed a chief agent—Alma Shepard, a sharp-faced woman in her mid-sixties, who was a staunch believer in the Drake, and whose husband was one of the best-known tailors in Des Moines—with power to appoint further sub-agents who would spread the word and collect money. He explained that, instead of selling shares as Sudie Whittaker had done, they would merely seek donations, with the assurance that when settlement came the "donators" would get their money back, plus six per cent compound interest and a discretionary bonus. The new approach would make it more difficult for the law to touch him—after all, what was illegal about accepting a donation? He knew that everyone involved would be skimming money off the top, so he made his requirements clear. He needed twenty-five hundred dollars (about twenty-five thousand dollars today) a week, every week, without fail. Then, with his American operation in place, he returned to London.

Records kept by American Express in London show how Hartzell's business gained momentum. In the month of April, 1924, he received about four hundred and fifty pounds sterling by wire transfer; in July, 1925, his receipts amounted to £1,435; and by September of the following year the sum had risen to £1,650 (about seventy-five thousand dollars today).

Hartzell had been growing more comfortable in London. He took elocution lessons and learned to dance. His writing style improved notably. In the afternoons, he treated himself to manicures and massages. Sometimes he donned a Stetson; at other times he favored spats, monocle, and cane. He told friends that he had been presented at Buckingham Palace. In an interview with his prison psychiatrist in 1936, he describes how he found himself a string of girlfriends, sometimes sleeping with them, always using (as he put it) "a conundrum." Evidently, he didn't use his conundrums diligently enough, for one of his girlfriends, Eunice Colliss, the daughter of the manager of an upscale tobacco store on the Strand, where he sometimes bought cigars, gave birth to a son, Wilson Hartzell Colliss. There are angry letters from Eunice in the Scotland Yard file, even though she and her illegitimate son were put on Hartzell's payroll.

He took an apartment in a handsome mansion block on Basil Street in Knightsbridge. His suits were made on Savile Row. He later boasted to the prison psychiatrist that he dined at the Savoy so often that he had a regular table there, No. 101. In wires and letters sent to America, he referred to himself as Baron Buckland. Detective George Page, a Scotland Yard man who tailed Hartzell for several months, wrote a rueful account of his subject:

> I kept observation on the movements of Hartzell . . . and found them to be monotonously regular. Hartzell left his flat every morning at about 10:20. He invariably purchased four cigars at the tobacconists at Knightsbridge Station. He travelled by Underground from Knightsbridge to Piccadilly and sometimes took a cab for the short distance from the station to the American Express Offices. He would then go straight to the library. . . . He usually remained at the American Express Office until about 12 noon.
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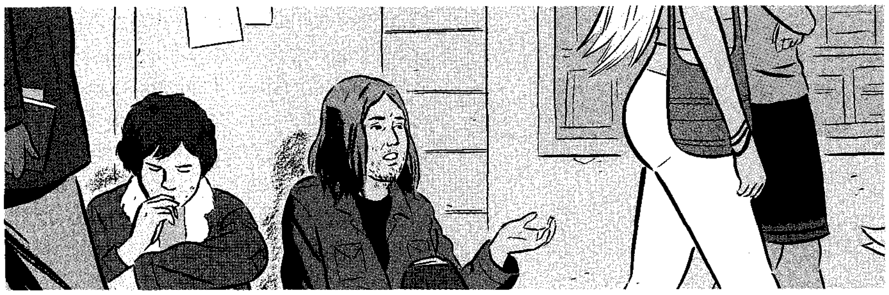
> On a number of occasions I went into the library and saw Hartzell reading cablegrams and sometimes writing on cable forms. I have also seen him draw large sums of money from the cashier. From the American Express, [Hartzell] invariably went to the Carlton Hotel Lounge and consumed expensive drinks. . . . [He] always left the Carlton about 1 pm . . . had lunch at a high class restaurant, and arrived home about 3:30 pm. He would re-appear about 6:30 pm to 7 pm in evening dress and would dine at the Berkeley or Savoy Hotel. I have seen him treated with the greatest deference by the hall porters at both these establishments and also at the Kit Cat Restaurant, when he has entered, sometimes accompanied by one or more splendidly dressed women.

In Des Moines, meanwhile, word of Hartzell's extravagant life style had got out. At the beginning of 1925, his chief agent, Alma Shepard, hired a private detective, and then, defying Hartzell's insistence that he be left alone, she went to London to confront him.

"I found him wearing a thousand-dollar diamond, living in a rich apartment, and spending as much as $100 on one dinner for his friends," Shepard told a Kansas City *Star* reporter in 1929. "He

LOWEST EBB • DENIS JOHNSON

HOMELESS AND HIGH



ADRIAN TOMINE

I arrived penniless in Berkeley in February of 1973, at night, dropped off on Telegraph Avenue by a woman driving around in her commune's Volvo.

By this time, the era of peace, love, and flowers had overripened into madness. Destitute youngsters without any idea of how to take care of themselves, hundreds of them, poured up and down the Ave near the campus in a state of crazed exhaustion, kicking along through rubbish as in the aftermath of a generalized panic or some major disaster, looking hideous in the orange light of street lamps.

Fortunately for people like me, charity abounded in Berkeley. Every day, two churches gave out, between them, a free lunch and a free dinner, without any preaching. Nobody starved who was willing to wait in a line three blocks long to get a cup of reconstituted chocolate milk and a peanut-butter sandwich on white bread. Elsewhere, there was also a free shower. It was a regular single-size shower, but, as long as one more person would fit, you just jumped in naked and started washing, no matter how many were in there or what gender they were.

I was a snob, and refused to beg on the street, but I wasn't above panhandling for the Berkeley Free Clinic, where I was given a small locked coin box each morning and sent out into the streets, for a commission of thirty per cent, which generally amounted to a dollar or two by day's end. Occasionally, I worked for an entrepreneurial hippie with a pickup truck who needed help with light hauling jobs he'd contracted for. He paid a couple of dollars an hour, and gave me any books we happened to find among the junk that we took to the dump. Once, I got the multivolume "A Pictorial History of the World War Two Years" and sold it for four-fifty, the largest single sum I made while living in Berkeley. Another time, I mowed an old lady's tiny lawn in exchange for breakfast, which she cooked and served me in the kitchen of her tiny home. It seemed to me an exotic transaction, but for her it was just like the Great Depression.

My highest ambition was to put together enough capital to get a quart of beer, a joint, a sandwich, and some kind of room for the night, all in the same day. On one occasion, I did grub up enough change to get drunk on discount beer and still pay for lodgings at a youth hostel, but its atmosphere felt very much like a jail's—homoerotic and quivering with suppressed violence. Still, as a young man convinced that everything that happened to him was something he'd someday write about, one night in such an atmosphere wasn't too horrible.

The rest of the time, I camped roofless in the hills. Nobody disturbed me. When I left in the mornings, I bunched my sleeping bag under a bush; it was always there when I came back in the evenings. When it rained, I had to go back down to the Ave and shelter under awnings with a miscellany of street types who had also been driven from their burrows. It was cold, it was wet, nobody had any money, nobody had enough drugs except one young man known as Goldfinger, who always carried a spray can of gold paint and a sock that he'd douse with the contents and breathe through deeply. His hands and nose and mouth were golden.

And that's how, on the Ave, we drank up the dregs of the sixties. We didn't feel desperate but, rather, unfettered; there was a sense that we'd broken the bonds of mindless materialism and hypocritical conformity and were now just naturally floundering around until the new shape of human freedom manifested itself. Actually, I think we were all just depressed, at the very least. Probably some of us were out-and-out psycho. And the drugs weren't helping.

Looking back, from the perspective of a middle-class, middle-aged man, I see that the dynamic, which we thought of as free of hassles and hangups, was pretty much that of the average canine kennel. Women were always greeted as follows: "Hey, what's happening, got an old man?" If they had no old man, you then said, "Wanna ball?," or "Wanna get high?"

As a pickup line, "Wanna ball?" never worked. "Wanna get high?" was sometimes successful. I never used it. During my travels up and down the West Coast, I didn't hook up with any women at all, because, in my opinion, I never had enough drugs for anybody but myself.

For me, this was just an interlude. Within a couple of months, I'd left the maniac road and was sleeping on clean sheets at my parents', in Phoenix, and working a job. Shortly after that, I headed back to college, where I stayed for as long as they'd have me. ♦

"I'm having my wedding ring melted down into a bullet."

could not show me Col. Drexel Drake, nor Drake's niece, nor any evidence that there was a Drake Estate. He did take me into the vaults of the Bank of England and show me big bags, like potato sacks, filled with coins, which he said were Spanish doubloons and pieces-of-eight which Drake had captured and that belonged to the Drake Estate."

On her return to Des Moines, Shepard denounced Hartzell as a fraud. His response was swift and hot-tempered and clever. He launched a counter-plot, alleging that Shepard and her husband were thieves who had withheld seventy-five thousand dollars of the $166,775 they had collected for him. He wrote to his Iowa attorney and instructed him to circulate the letter widely around Des Moines. He promised that his new enemy, Alma Shepard (and all other opponents), would be prosecuted both civilly and criminally. "I shall spend $100,000 to $1m to achieve this object if I have to," he said. "What a bunch of skunks there must be in Des Moines . . . Shepard and her criminal gang, and low trash she has collected around her, to try to cover up her and their criminal work."

The Shepards suddenly found themselves the subject of ugly gossip. They were ostracized in Des Moines. Alma Shepard's husband was hit so hard by their disgrace that he was committed to the Iowa state asylum at Clarinda, and died soon afterward. Hartzell "reduced me to poverty, drove my husband insane, and here I am, a widow, with just a few dollars left me by my sister, living alone in one room," Shepard told the Kansas City *Star*. Oscar Hartzell had won again.

In the nineteen-twenties, things were easy for the con man. The economy was in an unprecedented boom, and the old rules for acquiring wealth didn't apply. The writer Alva Johnston described how investors had to be driven away with clubs during the Florida land rush precisely because there were so many verifiable tales of instant wealth attained and kept: four million dollars picked up by a hot-dog seller, an eleven-year-old who made a hundred thousand dollars, and so on. In Florida, in 1925, you could invest in what the speculator thought was a con, a fraud, a scam, an out-and-out and inexcusable hustle, and still make money.

Schemes blossomed like confetti on Lindbergh's parade. Chicago swindlers sold shares in the League of Nations. Charles Ponzi drew in as much as two hundred thousand dollars a day through the simple expedient of borrowing from his present investors to pay his past ones. Hundreds of itinerant Russian immigrants invested a half-million dollars in a fictitious gold-and-platinum mine on the Hudson River. Investors purchased uninspected wetland that turned out to be under the Mississippi—property advertised as already having running water.

In the Midwest, farmers and small businessmen found themselves with more spare cash than they'd ever had. To them, Wall Street looked like a big-city operation, tricky and rigged, and the Drake estate didn't seem so outlandish in comparison. Rather, it seemed like a reasonable speculative possibility, not a sure thing but a better bet than anything else, and it became their own insider deal, talked of at picnics, at church socials, in bars, and on farms. Hartzell's letters were passed around in secret, with great ceremony. A cult was called into being: Are you in on the deal? Come in on the deal. You have to be in on the deal.

Thousands (one State Department official calculated that there were at least two hundred thousand, although between seventy and eighty thousand is a more reasonable figure) put every dollar they could get into the scheme. They weren't merely Hartzell's gulls, either; in the ferocity of their desire to believe, they became his unconscious conspirators. In Iowa and Minnesota, in particular, the Drake estate became a craze that split entire towns into believers and nonbelievers.

"I was working as a hired hand for a farmer," recalled an old-timer from Adrian, a small farming town on the Minnesota prairie. "One day, my boss couldn't find me. He finally heard a ruckus out back behind the barn. Some of the local fellas were roughing me up, thinking that a working bachelor like me would have some extra money handy to buy some Drake bonds."

Father Otto Zachmann, the Catholic pastor of Adrian, reckoned that ninety per cent of the people in the surrounding countryside were donating to the Drake fund. "The fever of it is spreading like a plague and breaking down our people," Zachmann told a reporter. "They neglect their work and get together in groups and talk about the time, soon coming, when all of them will be millionaires. They have been promised seven thousand dollars for each dollar they donate to the fund, and the old and the young are digging into their savings and investing all they have."

It was no use. Eventually, Father Zachmann, tired of trying to warn his parishioners, left town.

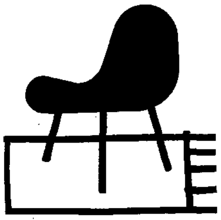
The earliest analysis in English of how the con man works occurs in the pamphlets of the Elizabethan writer Robert Greene, who is best known to us today as William Shakespeare's first critic. (It was Greene who accused Shakespeare of plagiarism and dubbed him "an upstart Crow.") Many of the scams that Greene describes (variations on "find the lady" and loaded-dice games, for example) are still in operation today, and he also shows us that the structure of the grift remains essentially the same. The street hustler, or coney-catcher, as he was called then (a coney was a rabbit, ready to be skinned), finds his victim—the coney—and pulls him in. This is followed by the selling of the scheme, after which comes the payoff. And then there is the next stage, when circumstances change, or perhaps go wrong, and the coney-catcher either skips out or, if he's nimble enough, persuades the coney to put up more money. Elizabethans sometimes called this "the misrule," and this is where Oscar Hartzell became very good. He couldn't tell his donators what they most wanted to hear, that the money—all those billions—was on its way, but he was constantly telling them the next best thing, that it would be coming very soon: next month, six months from now, next year. And when it didn't come he was always ready with another excuse.

On November 3, 1927, he wrote, "Owing to immediate and unavoidable State reasons they have to delay the settlement for a month. . . . [It] will be handed over with as much speed as His Majesty can conveniently allow." On June 29, 1928, there was an account of an unforeseen error discovered by the new Lord Chancellor. The mistake, Hartzell reported, "has been thrashed out and settled. In consequence of this, however, certain papers and charts will have to be made out afresh to rectify the error in turning over to me certain monies and properties. This is being done at the utmost possible speed."

The American ambassador had been recalled to Washington. Why? To discuss the Drake affair. England was rumored to be coming off the gold standard. Why? Because there was panic at the Bank of England concerning this business of ten billion dollars, twenty billion, forty billion (he began steadily to inflate the figure) that was soon to leave British shores for America. There were further inventions. A Scotland Yard detective, Mogford (sometimes also referred to as Mogford-Blythe), was helping him. In his letters, Hartzell let slip that he was consulting with Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, and rubbing shoulders with the aristocracy. The Pope himself was on his side.

In October, 1929, the stock market collapsed. In November, Charles Cochran wired Hartzell roughly six thousand dollars; the following month Hartzell received nine thousand dollars. In 1930, his monthly receipts were as high as ten thousand five hundred dollars, and American Express records indicate that from June, 1930, to December, 1932, he got more than two hundred and seventy thousand dollars (which is the equivalent of about $2.7 million today) from America.

The beginning of the Depression put an end to most of the swindles of the twenties, but it served only to enhance the appeal of the Drake scheme, confirming the donators' distrust of Wall Street. It also became part of Hartzell's narrative of delay. News of the impending transfer of the fortune had leaked out and caused the crash, he said. Now the American money lords had ganged up with the British financial interests and were trying to prevent release of a settlement so vast and complex that it would wreck the Bank of England and further rock the economic structure of the world.



On October 11, 1930, John Maynard Keynes published an essay, "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren," in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Keynes attacked economic gloom and boosted the virtues of capital investment, arguing that governments could spend their way out of depression. He also made reference to the treasure that Sir Francis Drake had stolen from Spain, linking England's emergence as a world power directly to the good use that Queen Elizabeth had made of this money. "The power of compound interest over 300 years is such as to stagger the imagination," Keynes wrote. "Every pound which Queen Elizabeth invested in foreign trade has now become £100,000."

Hartzell seized on the essay. Here was the world's "top money man" echoing what he had been saying all along. Puzzled government men found farmers in bib overalls repeating the theories of John Maynard Keynes.

"The 'Donators' believe in Hartzell and the Drake estate with the fire of the most rabid religious fanatics," a State Department observer wrote. What, for the Drakers, had begun as a speculation had turned into a holy cause.

Oscar Hartzell had become a champion of the people, and his wires from this time were frantic and intoxicated: "Pour the letters into Washington like pouring buckshot into a chicken thief. I would not trust one of the whole bunch down east in my chicken house in broad daylight. They are in a nice mess as I told you they would not be if they had listened to me." When challenged, he complained of being double-crossed, accusing jealous rivals of trying to turn themselves into "the great I am." There was only one "great I am" in this matter, and his name was Oscar Hartzell. "When the gigantic bubble bursts," he wired one of his supporters, "you will all get such a shock on your side that all you will hear is a WOW."

Prison psychiatrists disagreed about when, exactly, Hartzell went mad, but by the end of 1930, having repeated the same lies for so long, he had begun to crack. He drank more, he spent more. His prison medical records show that around this time, in 1930 or 1931, he wrecked a car and was badly injured. He claimed, in front of one of his female friends, that he had "a ship laden with gold, anchored in the Thames." To another, he boasted that he expected to buy Blenheim Palace soon.

Later, when he was on trial, evidence of this aberrant behavior came from an unlikely source. In 1930, he began seeing an expensive psychic, Mrs. St. John Montague, who had her rooms in South Kensington. A few days after his first appointment, he had been drinking in the American bar at the Savoy at lunchtime when he fell into conversation with another American, a Texas oilman on vacation. Hartzell reminisced about the happiest days of his life, when he'd owned a big spread in the Texas panhandle. After the bar closed, the two men went on drinking at Hartzell's apartment. The friendly Texan had a confession to make. The side of the oil business he'd been involved with hadn't been quite honest. He was ashamed to say so, but he was in fact a bit of a confidence trickster.

One wonders what went through Hartzell's mind when he heard this. Was he suspicious? Did he laugh? Or was he so drunk that his usual instincts were obliterated? He said that he, too, had been involved with a bunch of crooks for a while before he realized they were working a con game. Since then, he'd been working solely on the Drake estate. There were thousands of claimants, and the estate was worth billions.

"It is, of course, merely a racket, but based on an old legend," Hartzell said. He must have been extremely drunk by then. "I am making money out of it, but I can't say that they will."

Later, Hartzell denied all knowledge of the drinking session, and refused to admit that he had ever conceded the Drake estate was "merely a racket." But the Texan was in fact an Englishman named Thomas William Barnard, a private eye who had been hired by Mrs. St. John Montague. Throughout the afternoon, he kept asking if he could use the toilet, where he scribbled notes. Barnard then reported this information to Mrs. St. John Montague, who used it to impress Hartzell with her uncannily accurate knowledge and, for months, to get more money out of him.

Thus the con man was handsomely clipped. More significant, Hartzell's state of mind had wavered. Drunk, he lost himself for a few moments. The mask had slipped.

The Drake swindle was absurd, and there were complaints from the first. The State Department's files on the matter were in the end more than twelve inches thick, filled with queries and allegations from chambers of commerce and Better Business Bureaus in Iowa, Illinois, the Dakotas, and Minnesota. Yet building a legal case against it wasn't so easy.

In 1928, a postal inspector named John Sparks, who was based in St. Louis, went to Iowa to investigate possible misuse of the mails. A con man might not use the mails himself, but if his scheme caused someone to write a letter, the Post Office Inspection Service could act. Fraud, or "F," cases were divided into thirty-one categories: there were land swindles, oil-well swindles, fake-pedigree-dog swindles, bogus work-at-home schemes, and bogus literary agencies; there were fake-diploma rackets, astrology rackets, and fake prize contests; there were marriage swindlers, turf tipsters, mail-order Romeos, and men who sold strawberry plants or a wide variety of wild animals and failed to deliver them; and then there were the genealogical rackets.

When Sparks arrived in Iowa, he found many Drake donators, but none were willing to testify. They clung to their dream of the deal, or told him to mind his own business, and Sparks couldn't come up with enough evidence to warrant the risk and expense of prosecution. When the crash washed many of the other frauds away, however, the Drake swindle was brought into high relief. John Sparks was put on the case on a permanent basis. He moved to Sioux City with his family, intending to stay there until the scheme had been stamped out.

Sparks sent hundreds of letters to Hartzell, trying to tempt him to use the mails. He drove to every Drake meeting and pep rally he heard about. He went to Boone, Iowa, to Canton, South Dakota, and many other towns. He identified most of Hartzell's agents: farmers, doctors, bank officials, owners of small businesses; most were churchgoers, men in their forties and fifties who were known within their communities. Harry Osborn had a soft-drink parlor and poolroom in Hartley, Iowa; A. C. Berry had a real-estate office in Mitchell, South Dakota; Otto G. Yant was a bank clerk in Des Moines; and so on.

Hartzell's friend and agent, Dr. Charles Cochran, had died, and his successor was a farmer named Amos Hartsock, a middle-aged man in dungarees, his skin burned by wind and sun. Sparks conducted his interview as Hartsock plowed a cornfield. Hartsock's speech was homespun, but he was happy to admit using the mails to solicit and receive money. He and others had been wiring large sums to Hartzell since 1922, totalling somewhere between seven hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand dollars, he thought.

Amos Hartsock had nothing to hide, and Sparks was puzzled. Wasn't he afraid that the Post Office was about to come down on him?

No, because the deal's on the level, Hartsock said. He asked if Sparks thought that Hartzell was a fraud. When Sparks said he *knew* Hartzell was a fraud, Hartsock took off his hat and wiped the sweat out of his eyes.

"The whole thing's as safe as government bonds," he said.

Under pressure from the American Embassy in London, the British Home Office asked Scotland Yard to determine whether Hartzell knew that the Drake estate was a charade and that he therefore could be deported. On December 12, 1932, Chief Inspector Charles Wesley and Sergeant Arthur Bishop called at Hartzell's apartment on Basil Street. Wesley asked the questions, while Bishop made notes in shorthand.

"Are you the heir?" Wesley asked.

"No," Hartzell replied.

"Are you the supposed heir?"

"That I cannot divulge."

"Where is the Drake estate?"

"I cannot tell you offhand. It's all over the place."

"You had time to find out."

"I know but I cannot divulge everything. It is a great mystery."

"You are getting plenty of money from this mystery."

Hartzell smiled and drew on his cigar. "Certainly I am."

Wesley demanded concrete evidence that the scheme was legitimate, and Hartzell had nothing to show: no worked-up genealogies, no letters, no affidavits, none of the documentation, albeit bogus, with which Whittaker and Lewis had protected themselves. He relied on evasion and nerve.

"I do not give a damn for all the officials," he said. "The American government has treated me very badly, and I have no use for Americans or America." He then added, "I am practically British. Someone at the Home Office arranged this for me and when all this is ended my name will suddenly become Drake and I will be a British subject."

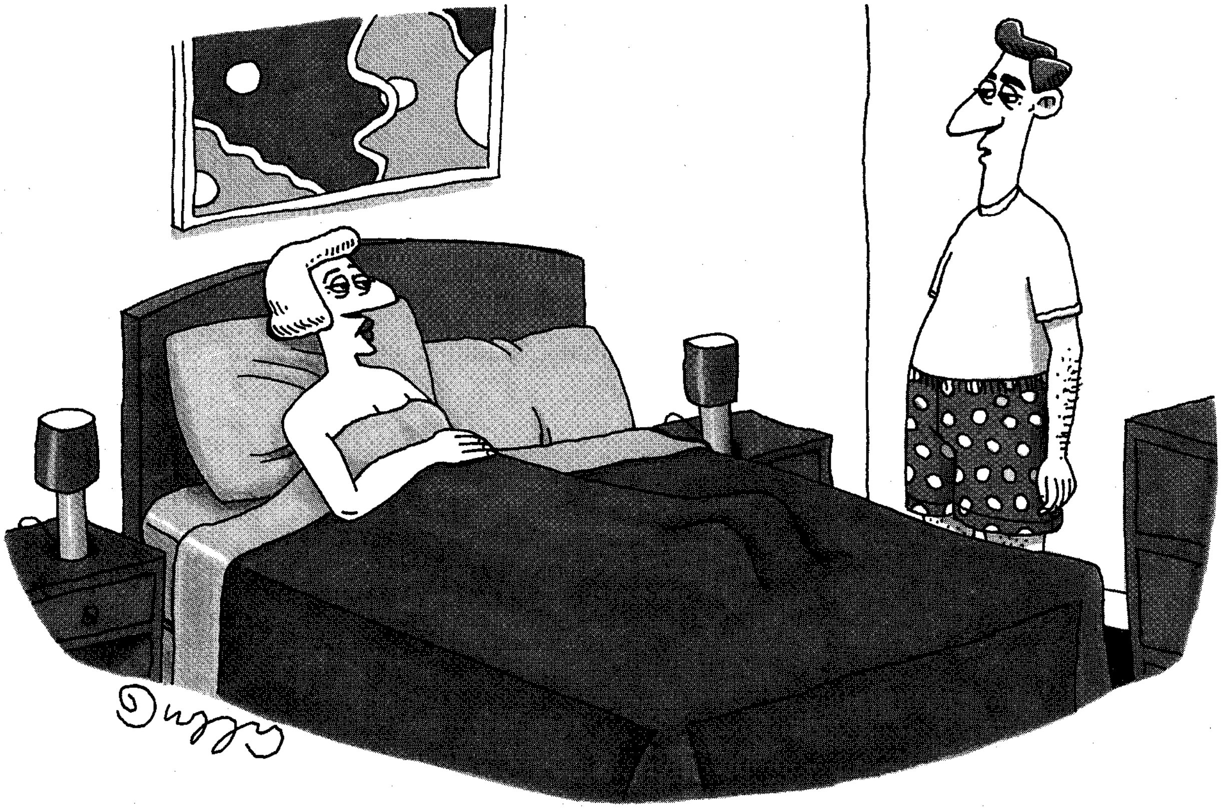
With that, the interview closed. But on January 9, 1933, Hartzell was arrested. A deportation order had been issued against him. He was so enraged when he heard this that he had to be subdued by the police. He was taken to the Brixton police station, where it was discovered that he had on him the equivalent of what today would be twenty-five thousand dollars in cash. The previous month had been one of his most lucrative to date. Once in custody, he was allowed to order his meals in, and he continued to eat and drink lavishly. Soon he accepted that he would be deported, and he wrote a letter to the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, asking that some of his money be used "to buy a first class ticket on as good a boat as possible."

On February 8th, two detectives drove him from Brixton into central London. Hartzell asked if he could take them to lunch, and they all went to Simpson's-in-the-Strand. He drank and smoked cigars, and afterward the detectives motored him around for a couple of hours, giving him a last look at the city he'd grown to love. The next morning, he sailed from Plymouth, travelling in a first-class stateroom on the French Line's Champlain.

When the Champlain arrived in New York, on February 16th, John Sparks was riding a motor launch across the harbor to meet it. Sparks confronted Hartzell, showing him certain letters and asking if he had written them. When the startled Hartzell admitted that he had, he was arrested, and the two men left New York for Sioux City, where Hartzell was indicted on fifteen counts of fraudulent misuse of the mails. On February 17th, the *Times* reported, "A mild-mannered little man with ruddy cheeks, which owed their color, Federal authorities said, to high living in London cafés on the $800,000 he collected from victims in America, the prisoner told Alvin McK. Sylvester, Assistant United States Attorney, that everything 'is above board, and I can prove it.'"

My father once showed me the fake passports and phony birth certificates he'd collected while he was on the run abroad, living under various assumed identities. He said that he had never forgotten his family (meaning my brother, my sister, and me) and that he had always known he would want to see us again one day. That may be true, but I also believe that he came back because he was exhausted and bored, even scared, and he knew that by returning, confessing, and serving jail time he could become Jack Rayner again. He was still sufficiently objective about his fabrications to be able to withdraw from them, and I'm sure that the appearance of the police detective who came to arrest him was in some ways a relief, a summons not just from the law but from himself. He conceded defeat but reclaimed the core of his identity.

Hartzell would have greater difficulty. Ten years had passed since he had last been in America. Now he'd been caught, and the game was surely over. But something in him refused to admit failure. He was Oscar Hartzell! He was Baron



"To quote my broker, 'Past results are no guarantee of future performance.'"

"At least there's one place that's not youth-oriented."

• •

Buckland, rightful heir to billions! Would Sir Francis Drake surrender? And in Sioux City he found a crowd, not wanting to lynch him but longing for him to be who he claimed to be. They were still believers, eager for the reassurance that the Drake estate would soon be theirs. More than sixty-five thousand dollars was collected for his defense. Local senators and congressmen were lobbied and hounded by Drakers. At the offices of the Sioux City *Journal* and the Sioux City *Tribune*, it was reported, "the phones in the city rooms jangled and rocks sailed through the windows," because the papers had taken an anti-Hartzell position.

The trial began on October 23, 1933, and was by far the most theatrical the city had ever seen. Reporters came from as far away as New York and Los Angeles. Hartzell's supporters jammed the corridors and benches. One farmer, disappointed at being unable to find a seat in court, said, "This sort of thing ought to be pulled off in a stadium." The government's chief prosecutor, Harry Reed, was shoved and jostled, scorned as a lackey of Wall Street with nothing on his mind but robbing Iowa farmers. Reed later wrote, "It was like the crusades in the Middle Ages. If you did not believe in Oscar Hartzell, you'd better keep your mouth shut. Times were tough and Hartzell was the savior of northern Iowa."

The *Journal* and the *Tribune* reported that Hartzell alternately wore pince-nez and a pair of tortoiseshell glasses that gave him an owlish, respectable air. Dressed in a gray Savile Row suit and a blue silk tie with a horseshoe pattern, he seemed at ease, picking his teeth and staring out the window, affecting little interest in the proceedings. When the court sessions were over, he lit a cigar and walked to the Martin Hotel, where he had taken a wing. The lobby of the hotel was always jammed with Drakers, looking to shake Hartzell's hand.

John Sparks, the prosecution's first witness, established that Hartzell had used the mails to encourage people to invest in the Drake estate. But, once a score or so of the donators had been summoned, it was clear that the prosecution had a tough job. Not one of the donators would make a direct statement against Hartzell. Harry Reed asked them if they wanted their money back, and they said they didn't. He asked them if they believed they were about to be millionaires, and they said they did. One old farmer was reluctant to say how much he'd invested. "You see, my wife and I went into this together and I slipped one over on her and put in a hundred and seventy-five dollars more than she did," he said.

A secret witness, known to the press as Mr. X, turned out to be the private eye Thomas Barnard. He told the story of that drunken afternoon in the Basil Street apartment, when Hartzell had confessed that the Drake scheme was a racket. This was damning stuff, but the star for the prosecution was Charles Challen, a London barrister who had been called as an expert on English law. He'd lost an arm fighting in the First World War and created sympathy on the stand, where his delivery was droll and superior. Reed later wrote, "Challen was firmly convinced that water was fatal except for bathing and that under no circumstances could American water be taken internally. He further announced that a quart of intoxicating liquor was essential to him daily."

Challen gave a dazzling performance, explaining that there had never been any such tribunal as the Lord & King's Commission; it was just a product of Hartzell's imagination. Even more damaging was Challen's statement that in England a statute of limitations restricted an heir's right of recovery to twelve years at the most. There never could have been a claim to Drake's long-lost fortune, even if it had existed, which it didn't. With dramatic aplomb, Challen waved a copy of what may have been the oldest document ever presented in an American court: the correctly sealed and executed last will and testament of Sir Francis Drake. There was no mention of a son, legitimate or otherwise. The dreams of opulence of countless Midwesterners appeared to vanish into the air.

Hartzell, who hadn't taken the stand to testify, was found guilty on all counts and sentenced to ten years in Leavenworth. On November 18, 1933, despite the protests of Harry Reed, Hartzell was let out on bail pending appeal. A few days later, he roused his followers. He told them that every time Franklin Roosevelt left the White House he was pressuring the British government to hand over the Drake billions. If the Vice-President was shown in a newspaper photograph lighting a pipe, it was a sign that distribution was imminent. Huey Long's "every man a king" and "share the wealth" speeches were references to the same.

Hartzell's conviction was widely reported in the press and on the radio, but, even so, the swindle began all over again. Drake headquarters were relocated from Des Moines to an office in Chicago, and a hundred and fifty thousand dollars was raised to fund the appeal. Rallies took on the fervor of religious meetings. Meanwhile, Hartzell was living in a suite of rooms at the Croydon Hotel in Chicago, drinking heavily, and going out of his mind. He seemed to be in an exalted, almost visionary state. Patrick Cahill, a Chicago lawyer who had served as an expert witness for the defense, became his friend. In an affidavit, Cahill stated that Hartzell refused to handle American money and insisted on keeping either English or Canadian currency, saying the dollar would soon be valueless. Hartzell, knowing that Cahill was Irish, assured him that he intended to buy Northern Ireland from the British and give the Irish their complete independence. He would also put a large part of the state of Iowa aside for his family and friends, so that as long as they lived they could enjoy milk and honey.

His appeal was turned down on August 16, 1934. Even as he was taken away to Leavenworth, his agents returned to work fired up by the big chief's martyrdom. Delmar Short—an Illinois man whose family had lost their farm in 1931—now kept the books in Chicago and issued the following message:

> I will say our deal is going fine. This last stunt of taking him away is all in the play. We have been advised all along that the outside world would think this is a fraud. If the papers came out and said the Drake estate thing was okay, we would be run to death by agents and grafters, and some of our heavy donors would possibly have trouble with kidnappers. . . . As to Hartzell, he is not where the papers say, even though he left Chicago with officers. We know where he is and we know the reason.

The last phase of the swindle netted as much as a half-million dollars (most of it presumably pocketed by Delmar Short and colleagues, and by Canfield Hartzell), and produced wild instances of faith run awry. Arthur Capper, a senator from Kansas, wrote to Fred Zerbst, the warden of Leavenworth, "The suggestion is made that Hartzell is being granted special privileges at the penitentiary, such as being given quarters in the home of the warden." (Zerbst replied, "I beg leave to advise you that Hartzell is employed here as a cleaner in 'B' cell house, scrubbing floors, etc. . . . He occupies a cell, five feet by nine feet, in that cell house.") Others believed that Hartzell walked in through one door of the prison and out through another and was now being protected from hired gunmen by Secret Service agents. In Adrian, some of Hartzell's followers insisted that the trial itself had been a fraud, a mere smoke screen to cover up the fact that he was too big for the government to handle. They formed themselves into a cult known as the New Order. At a two-day meeting on a farm near Auburn, Iowa, plans were outlined for building golf links, swimming pools, playgrounds, and game preserves for the exclusive use of the Drakers after they received their share of the estate.

On April 9, 1935, detectives raided the Drake headquarters in Chicago. Records were seized, and forty-one people were indicted. Hartzell was brought from Leavenworth, tried again, and was among those found guilty. This second trial had the desired effect: the Drake swindle began to fade.

Hartzell's sentence was deferred pending psychiatric evaluation. In February, 1936, he was examined by Dr. Harry M. Hoffman, the director of the behavioral clinic of the criminal court of Cook County. Hoffman found his subject to be well oriented in regard to time and place, and to have a precise memory of much of his past. He knew where he was, and he knew the date. He knew the name of the President and the names of the governor of Illinois and the mayor of Chicago.

"You never hear strange voices talking to you?" Hoffman asked.

"No, no, not at all," Hartzell replied.

"Do you think you have some special mission in life?"

"That has never crossed my mind," Hartzell said. "I went in as a cold-blooded business proposition. I'll trade with you twenty-four hours a day if you'll let me make some money and you can make money. I'm a money man. I never harmed a human being in my life."

He wasn't worried about being in jail. On the contrary, he was more concerned about being released, for he feared that he would be killed by the financial interests. After all, he was about to be the richest person who ever lived or walked the earth. The world would not begin to come out of the Depression until the Drake money was handed over to him, at which time the United States would no longer be a democracy but would be a part of Great Britain again, like Canada, and he would be the dominant figure in this new setup. He would be able to start and stop wars because of his great financial power. He'd be sure, for instance, to make Mussolini stop the war in Ethiopia. Soon he would be the unknown hand, the silent man behind the scenes of power. He would be top dog.

It's possible to speculate that this was an act, that the mania was just another trickster's mask, that Oscar was laughing up his sleeve all the while. Harry Hoffman didn't think so. He had no doubt that Hartzell believed every word he said, and his diagnosis was paranoia, with delusions of grandeur and persecution.

Hartzell became sad and rueful for a moment, remembering England. "I think you'd like to have known me there," he said. Then he brightened. His supporters had turned him into a prophet, a Christ figure, and he had indeed made a strange journey from the cornfields of Iowa, but his mind was somewhere else, travelling the high seas.

"You'll never have another globe-trotter like Drake was," he told Hoffman. "I'm Sir Francis Drake now."

Adjudged insane, Oscar Hartzell was transferred from Leavenworth to the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri. He died there on August 27, 1943. ♦

DEPT. OF FINANCE

BLOWING UP

How Nassim Taleb turned the inevitability of disaster into an investment strategy.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

One day in 1996, a Wall Street trader named Nassim Nicholas Taleb went to see Victor Niederhoffer. Victor Niederhoffer was one of the most successful money managers in the country. He lived in and worked out of a thirteen-acre compound in Fairfield County, Connecticut, and when Taleb drove up that day from his home in Larchmont he had to give his name at the gate and then make his way down a long, curving driveway. Niederhoffer had a squash court and a tennis court and a swimming pool and a colossal, faux-alpine mansion in which virtually every square inch of space was covered with American folk art. In those days, he played tennis regularly with the billionaire financier George Soros. He had just written a best-selling book, "The Education of a Speculator," which was dedicated to his father, Artie Niederhoffer, a police officer from New York City. He had a huge and eclectic library and a seemingly insatiable desire for knowledge. When Niederhoffer went to Harvard as an undergraduate, he showed up for the first squash practice and announced that he would someday be the best in that sport; and, sure enough, he soon beat the legendary Sharif Khan to win the North American Open Championship. That was the kind of man Niederhoffer was. He had heard of Taleb's growing reputation in the esoteric field of options trading, and summoned him to Connecticut. Taleb was in awe.

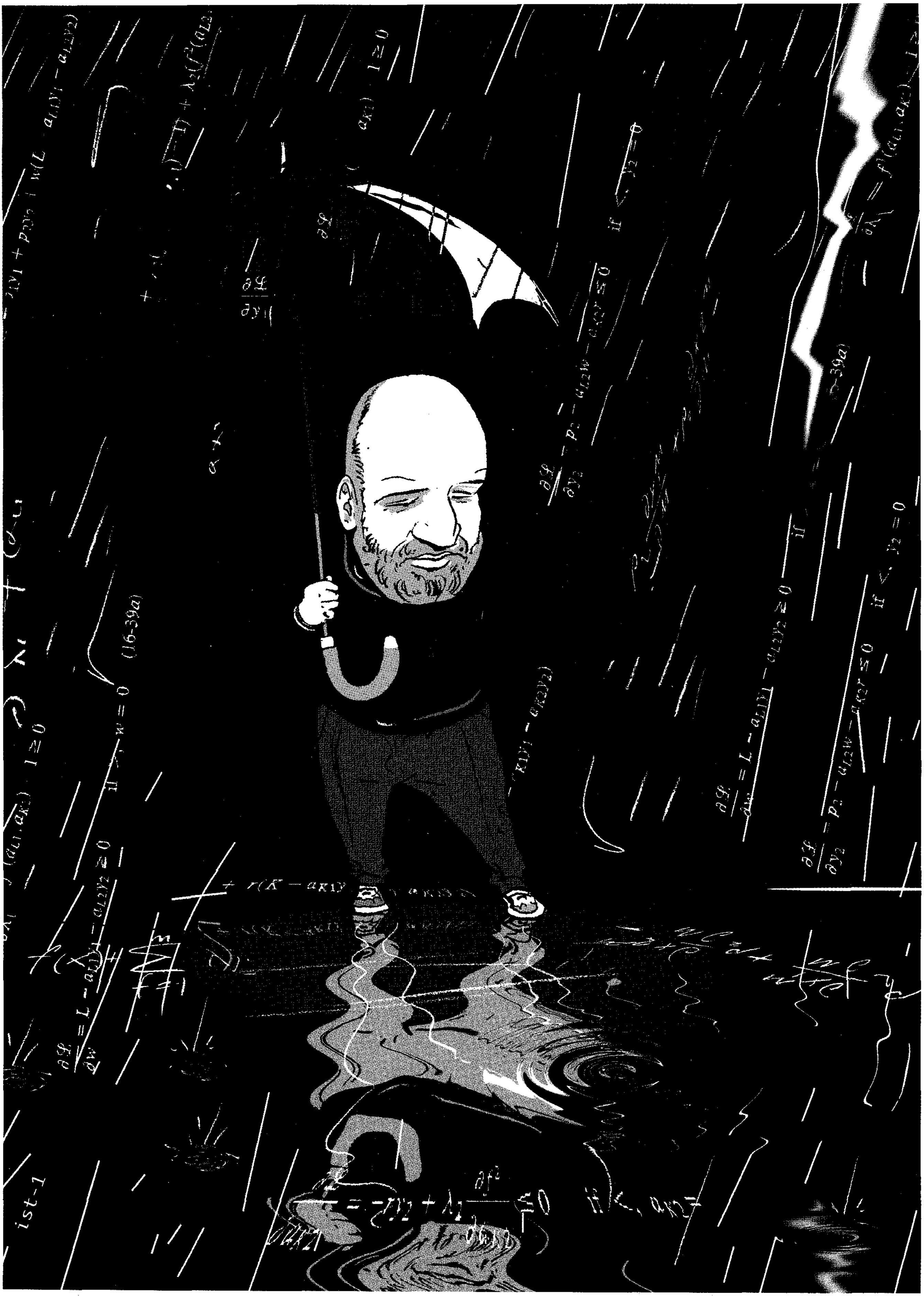
"He didn't talk much, so I observed him," Taleb recalls. "I spent seven hours watching him trade. Everyone else in his office was in his twenties, and he was in his fifties, and he had the most energy of all. Then, after the markets closed, he went out to hit a thousand backhands on the tennis court." Taleb is Greek-Orthodox Lebanese and his first language is French, and in his pronunciation the name Niederhoffer comes out as the slightly more exotic Nied*er*hoff*er*. "Here was a guy living in a mansion with thousands of books, and that was my dream as a child," Taleb went on. "He was part chevalier, part scholar. My respect for him was intense." There was just one problem, however, and it is the key to understanding the strange path that Nassim Taleb has chosen, and the position he now holds as Wall Street's principal dissident. Despite his envy and admiration, he did not want to be Victor Niederhoffer. For when he looked around him, at the books and the tennis court and the folk art on the walls, and when he contemplated the countless millions that Niederhoffer had made over the years, he could not escape the thought that it might all have been the result of sheer, dumb luck.

Taleb knew how heretical that thought was. Wall Street was dedicated to the principle that skill and insight mattered in investing just as they did in surgery and golf and flying fighter jets. Those who had the foresight to grasp the role that software would play in the modern world bought Microsoft in 1986, and made a fortune. Those who understood the psychology of investment bubbles sold their tech stocks at the end of 1999 and escaped the Nasdaq crash. Warren Buffett was known as the Sage of Omaha because it seemed incontrovertible that if you started with nothing and ended up with billions then you had to be smarter than everyone else: Buffett was successful for a *reason*. Yet how could you know, Taleb wondered, whether that reason wasn't simply a rationalization invented after the fact? George Soros used to say that he followed something called "the theory of reflexivity." But then, later, he wrote that in most situations his theory "is so feeble that it can be safely ignored." An old trading partner of Taleb's, a man named Jean-Manuel Rozan, once spent an entire afternoon arguing about the stock market with Soros. Soros was vehemently bearish, and he had an elaborate theory to explain why—which turned out to be entirely wrong. The stock market boomed. Two years later, Rozan ran into Soros at a tennis tournament. "Do you remember our conversation?" Rozan asked. "I recall it very well," Soros replied. "I changed my mind, and made an absolute fortune." He changed his mind! The truest thing about Soros seemed to be what his son Robert had once said:

> My father will sit down and give you theories to explain why he does this or that. But I remember seeing it as a kid and thinking, Jesus Christ, at least half of this is bullshit. I mean, you know the reason he changes his position on the market or whatever is because his back starts killing him. It has nothing to do with reason. He literally goes into a spasm, and it's this early warning sign.

For Taleb, then, the question why someone was a success in the financial marketplace was vexing. Taleb could do the arithmetic in his head. Suppose that there were ten thousand investment managers out there—which is not an outlandish number—and that every year, entirely by chance, half of them made money and half of them lost money. And suppose that every year the losers were tossed out, and the game replayed with those who remained. At the end of five years, there would be three hundred and thirteen people who had made money in every one of those years, and after ten years there would be nine people who had made money every single year in a row—*all out of pure luck*. Niederhoffer, like Buffett and Soros, was a brilliant man. He had a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago. He had pioneered the idea that through proper statistical analysis of patterns in the market an investor could identify profitable anomalies. But who was to say

ISTVAN BANYAI



For Taleb, buying a stock is a gamble that the future will be an improvement on the past. And who knows if that will be true?

that he wasn't one of those lucky nine? And who was to say that in the eleventh year Niederhoffer wouldn't be one of the unlucky ones, who suddenly lost it all—who suddenly, as they say on Wall Street, "blew up"?

Taleb remembered his childhood in Lebanon and watching his country turn, as he put it, from "paradise to hell" in six months. His family once owned vast tracts of land in northern Lebanon. All that was gone. He remembered his grandfather—the former Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon and the son of a Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon and a man of great personal dignity—living out his days in a dowdy apartment in Athens. That was the problem with a world in which there was so much uncertainty about why things ended up the way they did: you never knew whether one day your luck would turn and it would all be washed away.

So here is what Taleb took from Niederhoffer. He saw that Niederhoffer was a serious athlete, and he decided that he would be, too. He would bicycle to work and exercise in the gym. Niederhoffer was a staunch empiricist, who had turned to Taleb that day in Connecticut and said to him sternly, "Everything that can be tested *must be tested*"—and so when Taleb started his own hedge fund, a few years later, he called it Empirica. But that is where he stopped. Nassim Taleb decided that he could not pursue an investment strategy that had any chance of blowing up.

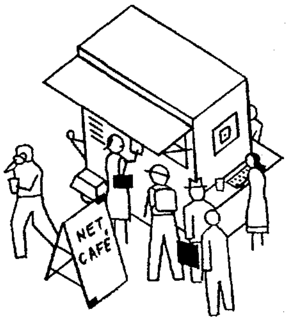
THE GRAND CONVERSATION

She. My people came from Korelitz,
where they grew yellow cucumbers
and studied the Talmud.
He. Mine pored over the mud
of mangold- and potato-pits
or flicked through kale plants from Comber
as bibliomancers of old
went a-flicking through deckle-mold.

She. Mine would lie low in the shtetl
when they heard the distant thunder
stolen by the Cossacks.
He. It was potato sacks
lumped together on a settle
mine found themselves lying under,
the Peep O'Day Boys from Loughgall
making Defenders of us all.

She. Mine once controlled the sugar trade
from the islets of Langerhans
and were granted the deed
to Charlottesville. *He.* Indeed?

Nassim Taleb is a tall, muscular man in his early forties, with a salt-and-pepper beard. His eyebrows are heavy and his nose is long. His skin has the olive hue of the Levant. He is a man of moods, and when his world turns dark his eyebrows come together and his eyes narrow and it is as if he were giving off an electrical charge. Some of his friends say that he looks like Salman Rushdie, although at his office his staff have pinned to the bulletin board a photograph of a mullah they swear is Taleb's long-lost twin, while Taleb himself maintains, wholly implausibly, that he resembles Sean Connery. He lives in a four-bedroom Tudor with twenty-six Byzantine icons, nineteen Roman heads, and four thousand books, and he rises at dawn each day to spend an hour writing. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Paris-Dauphine and is the author of two books, the first a highly regarded technical work on derivatives, and the second a treatise entitled "Fooled by Randomness," which was published last year and is to conventional Wall Street wisdom approximately what Martin Luther's ninety-five theses were to the Catholic Church. Some afternoons, he drives into the city and attends a philosophy lecture at City University. In the fall, he teaches a course in mathematical finance at New York University, after which he can often be found at the bar at the Odeon restaurant, in Tribeca, holding forth, say, on the finer points of stochastic volatility or the Greek poet C. P. Cavafy.



Taleb runs Empirica Capital out of an anonymous concrete office park in the woods on the outskirts of Greenwich, Connecticut. His offices consist, principally, of a trading floor about the size of a Manhattan studio apartment. Taleb sits in one corner, in front of a laptop, surrounded by the rest of his team—Mark Spitznagel, the chief trader, another trader named Danny Tosto, a programmer named Winn Martin, and a graduate student named Pallop Angsupun. Mark Spitznagel is perhaps thirty. Winn, Danny, and Pallop look as if they belong in high school. The room has an overstuffed bookshelf in one corner, and a television muted and tuned to CNBC. There are two ancient Greco-Syrian heads, one next to Taleb's computer and the other, somewhat bafflingly, on the floor, next to the door, as if it were being set out for the trash. There is almost nothing on the walls, except a slightly battered poster for an exhibition of Greek artifacts, the snapshot of the mullah, and a small pen-and-ink drawing of the patron saint of Empirica Capital, the philosopher Karl Popper.

My people called a spade a spade
and were admitted to the hanse
of pike- and pickax-men, shovels
leaning to their lean-to hovels.

She. Mine were trained to make a suture
after the bomb and the bombast
have done their very worst.
He. Between *fearsad* and *verst*
we may yet construct our future
as we've reconstructed our past
and cry out, my love, each to each
from his or her own quicken-queach.

She. Each from his stand of mountain ash
will cry out over valley farms
spotlit with pear blossom.
He. There some young Absalom
picks his way through cache after cache
of ammunition and small arms
hidden in grain wells, while his nag
tugs at a rein caught on a snag.

—*Paul Muldoon*

On a recent spring morning, the staff of Empirica were concerned with solving a thorny problem, having to do with the relation between the square root of *n*—where *n* is a given number of random sets of observations—and a speculator's confidence in his estimates. Taleb was up at a whiteboard by the door, his marker squeaking furiously as he scribbled possible solutions. Spitznagel and Pallop looked on intently. Spitznagel is a blond Midwesterner and does yoga; in contrast to Taleb, he exudes a certain laconic levelheadedness. In a bar, Taleb would pick a fight. Mark would break it up. Pallop is of Thai extraction and is doing a Ph.D. in financial engineering at Princeton. He has longish black hair, and a slightly quizzical air. "Pallop is very lazy," Taleb will remark, to no one in particular, several times over the course of the day, although this is said with such affection that it suggests that "laziness," in the Talebian nomenclature, is a synonym for genius. Pallop's computer was untouched and he often turned his chair around, so that he faced away from his desk. He was reading a book by the cognitive psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, whose arguments, he said a bit disappointedly, were "not really quantifiable." The three argued about the solution. It appeared that Taleb might be wrong, but before the matter could be resolved the markets opened. Taleb returned to his desk and began to bicker with Mark about what exactly would be put on the company sound system. Mark plays the piano and the French horn and has appointed himself the Empirica d.j. He wanted to play Mahler, and Taleb does not like Mahler. "Mahler is not good for volatility," Taleb complained. "Bach is good—the St. Matthew Passion!" Taleb gestured toward Spitznagel, who was wearing a gray woollen turtleneck. "Look at him. He wants to be like von Karajan, like someone who wants to live in a castle. Technically superior to the rest of us. No chitchatting! Top skier! That's Mark!" As Mark rolled his eyes, a man whom Taleb refers to, somewhat mysteriously, as Dr. Wu wandered in. Dr. Wu works for another hedge fund, down the hall, and is said to be brilliant. He is thin and squints through black-rimmed glasses. He was asked his opinion on the square root of *n* but declined to answer. "Dr. Wu comes here for intellectual kicks and to borrow books and to talk music with Mark," Taleb explained after their visitor had drifted away. He added darkly, "Dr. Wu is a Mahlerian."

Empirica follows a very particular investment strategy. It trades options, which is to say that it deals not in stocks and bonds but in the volatility of stocks and bonds. Imagine, for example, that General Motors stock is trading at fifty dollars, and that you are a major investor on Wall Street. An options trader comes up to you with a proposition. What if, within the next three months, he decides to sell you a share of G.M. at forty-five dollars? How much would you charge for agreeing to buy it at that price? You would look at the history of G.M. and see that in a three-month period it has rarely dropped ten per cent, and obviously the trader is only going to make you buy his G.M. at forty-five dollars if the stock drops below that point. So you decide you'll make that promise—or sell that option—for a relatively small fee, say, a dollar. You are betting on the high probability that G.M. stock will stay relatively calm over the next three months—and if you are right you'll pocket the dollar as pure profit. The options trader, on the other hand, is betting on the unlikely event that G.M. stock will drop *a lot*, and if that happens his profits are potentially huge. If the trader bought a basket of options from you at a dollar each and G.M. drops to thirty-five dollars, he'll buy a million shares at thirty-five dollars and turn around and force you to buy them at forty-five dollars, making himself suddenly very rich and you substantially poorer.

That particular transaction is called an "out-of-the-money option," or, more technically, a three-month put with a forty-five strike. But an option can be configured in a vast number of ways. You could sell the trader a G.M. option with a thirty-dollar strike, or, if you wanted to bet against G.M. stock going up, you could sell a G.M. option with a sixty-dollar strike. You could sell or buy options on bonds, on the S. & P. index, on foreign currencies or on mortgages, or on the relationship among any number of financial instruments of your choice; you could bet on the markets booming, or the markets crashing, or

LOWEST EBB • DAGOBERTO GILB

SPANISH GUY

I've driven across three deserts from my home in El Paso, where there's no work, to Long Beach, where, I'm told, there's so much. So what if I see only two tower cranes in the skyline? At the union hall, the business agent could care less that this journeyman carpenter has arrived. But I sign the long out-of-work list and then drive out to one of the cranes and ask. The superintendent there gives me the old "check back in two weeks," which might be a kind no, but when you're not working you have to keep positive. You tell the man thank you very much, and you shake his big, crusty hand firmly.

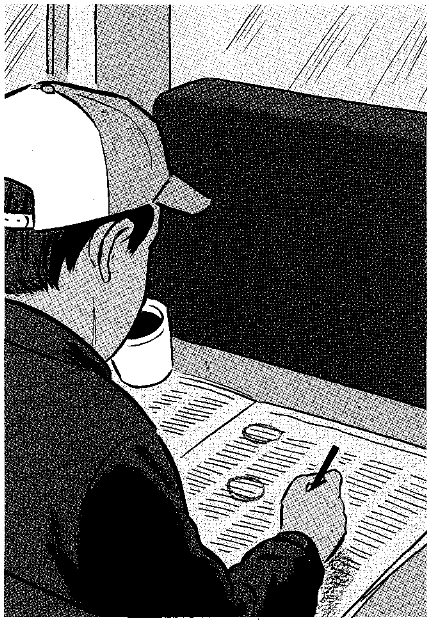
The next two weeks I sleep on couches, imposing on friends and acquaintances. The super in Long Beach tells me twice more to check back in a couple of weeks. Keeping positive, I scan the want ads, comparing prices for a weekly room.

One fine morning, positive happens: a job. O.K., only the promise of a week, possibly two, and something's not right, because the job-hungry locals won't take it. It's on a university campus, not my usual high-rise work. Beyond the perimeter "Hard Hat Only" fence, you can see women carrying books. My crew begins with a Wally and a Dave and a Jorge and a Roger and an apprentice, Lumpy. But people keep quitting or getting fired, and Dave says that Brad, our foreman, got too much authority too young, and that's what's wrong with this job. What an incredible dickhead, he explains.

I hear Brad screaming around the site and map escapes when his hard hat approaches. On day four, I'm too slow.

"Now, why would you guys think you'd have to do it that way?" He has taken off his hard hat, running his fingertips through his old-fashioned flattop.

I want to say, "Because you so so *esmart* and we so so *estupid*." But don't. It's just me and Dave. Brad starts shaking his head. He decides to make it me.


ADRIAN TOMINE

"I told you," he says with a disgusted sneer.

"I don't want you talking disrespectfully to me," I say.

"I'm not even raising my voice," he says, a little surprised that I can speak.

"O.K., then explain to me what it is you want."

Dave has backed away, pretending to do something else, his ears all satellite dish.

I don't care now, so when Lumpy walks up and asks what's wrong, I say, "Who knows? We're supposed to divine these things."

"You mumbling?" Brad asks.

"No. I just said I'll take my time now." I stuff my tools and bags into my box.

Jobless again, I insist on being positive: that check-back-in-two-weeks job really is getting close to needing men. And I find somewhere to live: "Furn room. Quiet priv. home, by P.C.H. for working male. Prefer non-drinker. $125 dep. $95 wkly."

A Spanish guy, she calls me. She is Danish, too talkative, and uses hip language like "guilt trip." Her ex-husband was a drunken cop, in A.A. now, a bastard still, and her son is a junkie. She's supposed to take four Valiums a day, but she takes only one, because she "knows her body." She has bursitis in the shoulder. She pulls her blouse down over the bra strap, showing me where. I pay a week plus deposit.

There are two other boarders, both kids from Oklahoma. They sit at the kitchen table and listen to her tell Big Jim stories. Big Jim is her husband. Big Jim, hyperactive, at the end of an all-night shift, having enough for two floozies. Big Jim cracking three heads in a fight. Big Jim, so mad, picking up that refrigerator and heaving it.

She is a neat maniac. Even if you're a grease monkey, she says, there's no reason you can't keep your fingernails clean. She doesn't like it when the bed isn't made in the morning. She likes the pillows fluffed out just so, and the bed cover under, then over, like this. And the decorative pillow goes centered. One time, I forgot to wipe the bathroom sink dry after I brushed my teeth. It's not so hard, she tells me. She has to un-reverse the sliding closet doors in my room.

She goes out on bingo nights, and I sit on a flowery couch in her living room and smell the cleaning fluids and sprays everywhere, drinking tap water from a mug with Danish names on it. There are bad oil paintings of sailboats and a needlepoint, framed, of a sailor from somewhere else and another time. Clocks, two to a wall, tick and chime, reminding endlessly. I don't like to be unpositive, but I hate clocks. I don't have clocks at home. I want to go home. I don't want to be doing any of this ever again, ever. ♦

the markets staying the same. Options allow investors to gamble heavily and turn one dollar into ten. They also allow investors to hedge their risk. The reason your pension fund may not be wiped out in the next crash is that it has protected itself by buying options. What drives the options game is the notion that the risks represented by all these bets can be quantified; that by looking at the past behavior of G.M. you can figure out the exact odds that G.M. will hit forty-five dollars in the next three months, and whether at a dollar that option is a good or a bad investment. The process is a lot like the way insurance companies analyze actuarial statistics in order to figure out how much to charge for a life-insurance premium, and, to make those enormously technical calculations, every investment bank has, on staff, a team of Ph.D.s—physicists from Russia, applied mathematicians from China, computer scientists from India. On Wall Street, those Ph.D.s are called "quants."

Nassim Taleb and his team at Empirica are quants. But they reject the quant orthodoxy, because they don't believe that things like the stock market behave in the way that physical phenomena like mortality statistics do. Physical events, whether death rates or poker games, are the predictable function of a limited and stable set of factors, and tend to follow what statisticians call a "normal distribution"—a bell curve. But do the ups and downs of the market follow a bell curve? The economist Eugene Fama once pointed out that if the movement of stock prices followed a normal distribution you'd expect a really big jump—what he specified as a movement five standard deviations from the mean—once every seven thousand years. In fact, jumps of that magnitude happen in the stock market every *three or four years*, because investors don't behave with any kind of statistical orderliness. They change their mind. They do stupid things. They copy each other. They panic. Fama concluded that if you charted the market's fluctuations, the graph would have a "fat tail"—meaning that at the upper and lower ends of the distribution there would be many more outliers than statisticians used to modelling the physical world would have imagined.

In the summer of 1997, Taleb predicted that hedge funds like Long-Term Capital Management were headed for trouble, because they did not understand this notion of fat tails. Just a year later, L.T.C.M. sold an extraordinary number of long-dated indexed options, because its computer models told it that the markets ought to be calming down. And what happened? The Russian government defaulted on its bonds; the markets went crazy; and in a matter of weeks L.T.C.M. was finished. Mark Spitznagel, Taleb's head trader, says that he recently heard one of the former top executives of L.T.C.M. give a lecture in which he defended the gamble that the fund had made. "What he said was 'Look, when I drive home every night in the fall I see all these leaves scattered around the base of the trees,' " Spitznagel recounts. " 'There is a statistical distribution that governs the way they fall, and I can be pretty accurate in figuring out what that distribution is going to be. But one day I came home and the leaves were in little piles. Does that falsify my theory that there are statistical rules governing how leaves fall? No. It was a man-made event.' " In other words, the Russians, by defaulting on their bonds, did something that they were not supposed to do, a once-in-a-lifetime, rule-breaking event. But this, to Taleb, is just the point: in the markets, unlike in the physical universe, the rules of the game can be changed. Central banks can decide to default on government-backed securities.

One of Taleb's earliest Wall Street mentors was a short-tempered Frenchman who dressed like a peacock and had an almost neurotic obsession with risk. He would call Taleb from Regine's at three in the morning, or take a meeting in a Paris night club, sipping champagne and surrounded by scantily clad women, and once he asked Taleb what would happen to his positions if a plane crashed into his building. Taleb was young then and brushed him aside. It seemed absurd. But *nothing*, Taleb soon realized, is absurd. Taleb likes to invoke Popper: "No amount of observations of white swans can allow the inference that all swans are white, but the observation of a single black swan is sufficient to refute that conclusion." Because L.T.C.M. had never seen a black swan in Russia, it thought no Russian black swans existed.

Taleb, by contrast, has constructed a trading philosophy predicated entirely on the existence of black swans—on the possibility of some random, unexpected event sweeping the markets. He never sells options, then. He only buys them. He's never the one who can lose a great deal of money if G.M. stock suddenly plunges. Nor does he ever bet on the market's moving in one direction or another. That would require Taleb to assume that he understands the market, and he knows that he doesn't. He doesn't have Warren Buffett's confidence. So he buys options on both sides—on the possibility of the market's moving both up *and* down. And he doesn't bet on minor fluctuations in the market. Why bother? If everyone else is vastly underestimating the possibility of rare events, then an option on G.M. at, say, forty dollars is going to be undervalued. So Taleb buys out-of-the-money options by the truckload. He buys them for hundreds of different stocks, and if they expire worthless he simply buys more. Taleb doesn't even invest in stocks—not for Empirica and not for his own personal account. Buying a stock, unlike buying an option, is a gamble that the future will represent an improved version of the past. And who knows whether that will be true? So all Taleb's personal wealth—and the hundreds of millions of dollars that Empirica has in reserve—is in Treasury bills. Few on Wall Street have taken the practice of buying options to such extremes. But if anything completely out of the ordinary happens to the stock market—if some random event sends a jolt through Wall Street and pushes G.M. to, say, twenty dollars—Nassim Taleb will not end up in a dowdy apartment in Athens. He will be very rich.

Not long ago, Taleb went to a dinner in a French restaurant just north of Wall Street. The people at the dinner were all quants: men with bulging pockets and open-collared shirts and the serene and slightly detached air of those who daydream in numbers. Taleb sat at the end of the table, drinking pastis and discussing French literature. There was a chess grand master at the table, with a shock of white hair, who had once been one of Anatoly Karpov's teachers, and another man who over the course of his career had worked, successively, at Stanford University, Exxon, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Morgan Stanley, and a boutique French investment bank. They talked about mathematics and chess and fretted about one of their party who had not yet arrived and who had the reputation, as one of the quants worriedly said, of "not being able to find the bathroom." When the check came, it was given to a man who worked in risk management at a big Wall Street bank, and he stared at it for a long time, with a slight mixture of perplexity and amusement, as if he could not remember what it was like to deal with a mathematical problem of such banality. The men at the table were in a business that was formally about mathematics but was really about epistemology, because to sell or to buy an option requires each party to confront the question of what it is he truly *knows*. Taleb buys options because he is certain that, at root, he knows nothing—or, more precisely, that other people believe they know more than they do. But there were plenty of people around that table who sold options, who thought that if you were smart enough to set the price of the option properly you could win so many of those one-dollar bets on General Motors that, even if the stock ever did dip below forty-five dollars, you'd still come out far ahead. They believe that the world is a place where, at the end of the day, leaves fall in a more or less predictable pattern.

The distinction between these two sides is the divide that emerged between Taleb and Niederhoffer six years ago in Connecticut. Niederhoffer's hero is the nineteenth-century scientist Francis Galton. Niederhoffer named his eldest daughter Galt, and there is a full-length portrait of Galton in his library. Galton was a statistician and a social scientist (and a geneticist and a meteorologist), and if he is your hero you believe that by aggregating and analyzing data points, you can learn whatever it is you need to know. Taleb's hero, on the other hand, is Karl Popper, who said that you cannot know with certainty that a theory is true; you can only know that it is *not* true. Taleb makes much of what he learned from Niederhoffer, but Niederhoffer insists that his example was wasted on Taleb. "Rumpole of the Bailey, in one of his cases, talked about being tried by the bishop who doesn't believe in God," Niederhoffer says. "Nassim is the empiricist who doesn't believe in empiricism." What is it that you claim to learn from experience, if you believe that experience cannot be trusted? Today, Niederhoffer makes a lot of his money selling options—and more often than not the person to whom he sells those options is Nassim Taleb. If one of them is up a dollar one day, in other words, that dollar is likely to have come from the other. The teacher and pupil have become predator and prey.

Years ago, Nassim Taleb worked at the investment bank First Boston, and one of the things that puzzled him was what he saw as the mindless industry of the trading floor. A trader was supposed to come in every morning and buy and sell things, and on the basis of how much money he made buying and selling he was given a bonus. If he went too many weeks without showing a profit, his peers would start to look at him funny, and if he went too many months without showing a profit he would be gone. The traders were often well educated, and wore Savile Row suits and Ferragamo ties. They dove into the markets with a frantic urgency. They read the *Wall Street Journal* closely and gathered around the television to catch breaking news. "There was always all this shouting. The Fed did this, the Prime Minister of Spain did that," Taleb recalls. "The Italian Finance Minister says there will be no competitive devaluation, this number is higher than expected, Abby Cohen just said this." It was a scene that Taleb did not understand.

"He was always so conceptual about what he was doing," says Howard Savery, who worked with Taleb for many years at Banque Indosuez and at UBS. "He used to drive our floor trader—his name was Tim—crazy. Floor traders are used to precision: 'Sell a hundred futures at eighty-seven.' Nassim would pick up the phone and say, 'Tim, sell some.' And Tim would say, 'How

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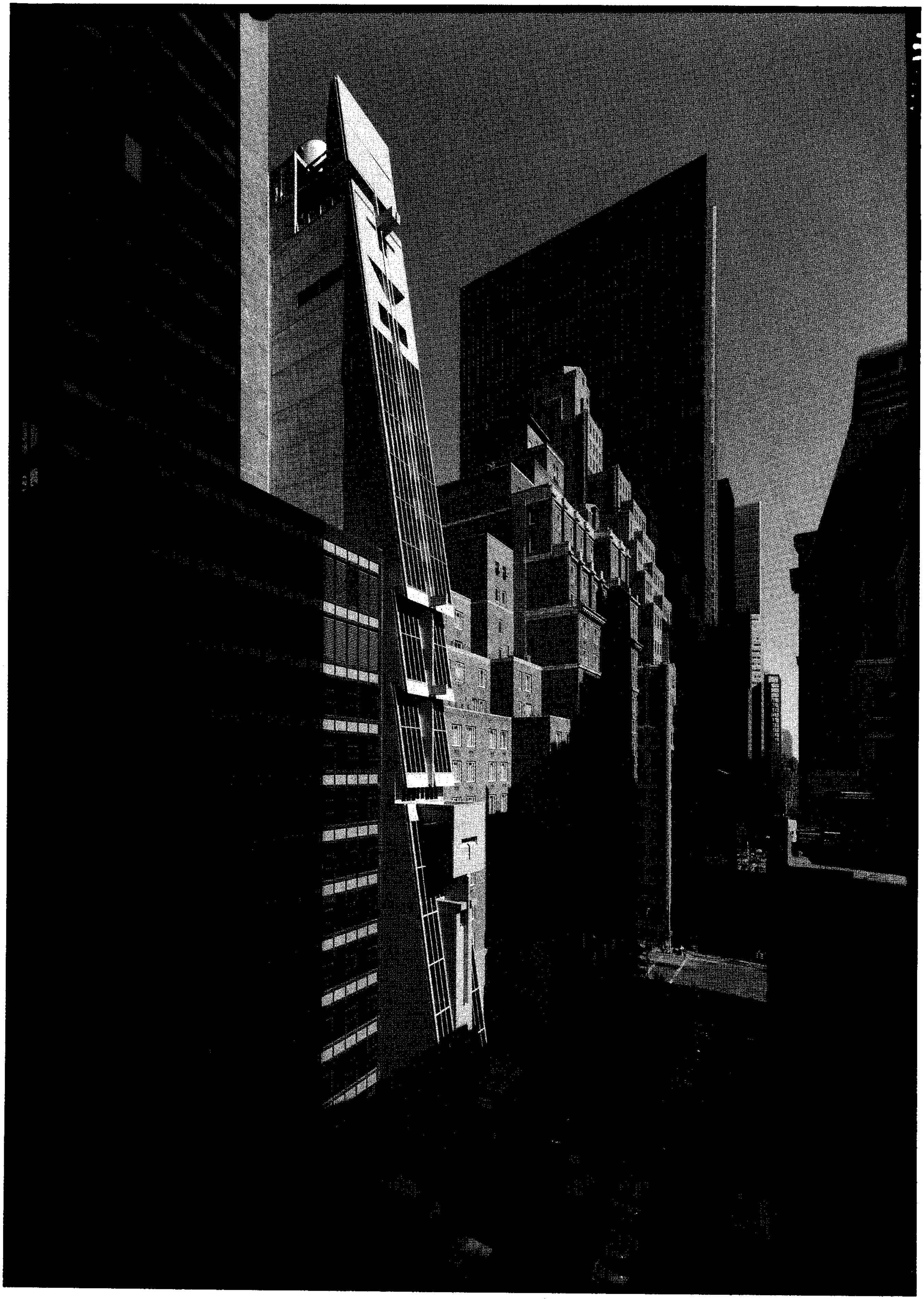
THE SKY LINE
BY ROBERT POLIDORI

NEO-ZIGGURAT

Sliver buildings are usually mediocre apartment towers crammed onto tiny, town-house-sized plots. The twenty-four-story Austrian Cultural Forum, which has just gone up on Fifty-second Street next to La Grenouille and the HarperCollins building, is the first sliver that is also a serious piece of architecture. The small plot is used so brilliantly that you can't imagine the building being anywhere else. In 1992, Raimund Abraham—a native of Austria who has been teaching architecture at Cooper Union for thirty years—won a competition to replace a mansion on the site, which had housed the Austrian cultural center since the nineteen-fifties. The Austrians wanted a building that would project a cliché-free image of their country. On a practical level, it had to include a large art gallery, a small auditorium, a library, offices, and an apartment for the director of the Forum. Abraham, who has lived in the United States since 1964 but hasn't built a public building here until now, was the only one of more than two hundred competitors who thought of placing the stairs across the back of the tower instead of on the side, leaving the width of the structure free. He put public spaces at the bottom, semiprivate spaces in the middle, and the director's apartment at the top. The building narrows as it rises—a nod both to the old rules of New York City zoning, which shape towers like pyramids, and to logic, since the public spaces require bigger floors than the private ones. The tower rises straight up at the back, where Abraham's double fire stair zigzags in a pattern he has likened to Brancusi's Endless Column. But he saved the greatest visual drama for the front: a series of sharply slanted planes of glass and zinc that slice into the sky.

—*Paul Goldberger*



"The judicial rulings are over here. That section is all lawyer jokes."

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many?' And he would say, 'Oh, a social amount.' It was like saying, 'I don't have a number in mind, I just know I want to sell.' Nassim and his group had this attitude that we're not interested in knowing what the new trade number is. When everyone else was leaning over their desks, listening closely to the latest figures, Nassim would make a big scene of walking out of the room."

At Empirica, there are no *Wall Street Journals* to be found. There is very little active trading, because the options that the fund owns are selected by computer. Most of those options will be useful only if the market does something dramatic, and, of course, on most days the market doesn't. So the job of Taleb and his team is to wait and to think. They analyze the company's trading policies, back-test various strategies, and construct ever more sophisticated computer models of options pricing. Danny, in the corner, occasionally types things into the computer. Pallop looks dreamily off into the distance. Spitznagel takes calls from traders, and toggles back and forth between screens on his computer. Taleb answers e-mails and calls one of the firm's brokers in Chicago, affecting the kind of Brooklyn accent that people from Brooklyn would have if they were actually from northern Lebanon: "Howyoudo*in*'?" It is closer to a classroom than to a trading floor.

"Pallop, did you introspect?" Taleb called out at one point as he wandered back in from lunch.

Pallop was asked what his Ph.D. is about. "Pretty much this," he said, waving a languid hand around the room.

"It looks like we will have to write it for him," Taleb said, "because Pallop is very lazy."

Empirica has inverted the traditional psychology of investing. You and I, if we invest conventionally in the market, have a fairly large chance of making a small amount of money in a given day from dividends or interest or the general upward trend of the market. We have almost no chance of making a large amount of money in one day, and there is a very small, but real, possibility that if the market collapses we could blow up. We accept that distribution of risks because, for fundamental reasons, it *feels* right. In the book by Kahneman and Tversky that Pallop was reading, for example, there is a description of a simple experiment, where a group of people were told to imagine that they had three hundred dollars. They were then given a choice between (a) receiving another hundred dollars or (b) tossing a coin so that if they won they got two hundred dollars and if they lost they got nothing. Most of us, it turns out, prefer (a) to (b). But then Kahneman and Tversky did a second experiment. They told people to imagine that they had five hundred dollars, and then asked them if they would rather (c) give up a hundred dollars or (d) toss a coin and pay two hundred dollars if they lost and nothing at all if they won. Most of us now prefer (d) to (c). From a probabilistic standpoint, those four choices are identical: they all yield an expected outcome of four hundred dollars. Nonetheless, we have strong preferences among them. Why? Because we're more willing to gamble when it comes to losses, but are risk averse when it comes to gains. That's why we like small daily winnings in the stock market, even if those entail the risk of losing everything in a crash.

At Empirica, by contrast, every day brings a small but real possibility that it will make a huge amount of money; no chance that it will blow up; and a very large possibility that it will lose a small amount of money. All those dollar, and fifty-cent, options that Empirica has accumulated—few of which will ever be exercised—soon begin to add up. By looking at a particular column on the computer screens showing Empirica's positions, anyone at the firm can tell you precisely how much money Empirica has lost or made so far that day. At 11:30 A.M., for instance, they had recovered just twenty-eight per cent of the money they had spent that day on options. By 12:30, they had recovered forty per cent, meaning that the day was not yet half over and Empirica was already in the red to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars. The day before that, it had made back eighty-five per cent of its money; the day before that, eighty-four per cent; the day before that, sixty-five per cent; and the day before that also sixty-five per cent; and, in fact—with a few notable exceptions, like the few days when the market reopened after September 11th—Empirica has done nothing but lose money since last April. "We cannot blow up, we can only bleed to death," Taleb says, and bleeding to death—absorbing the pain of steady losses—is precisely what human beings are hardwired to avoid. "Say you've got a guy who is long on Russian bonds," Savery says. "He's making money every day. One day, lightning strikes, and he loses five times what he made. Still, on three hundred and sixty-four out of three hundred and sixty-five days he was very happily making money. It's much harder to be the other guy, the guy losing money three hundred and sixty-four days out of three hundred and sixty-five, because you start questioning yourself. Am I ever going to make it back? Am I really right? What if it takes ten years? Will I even be *sane* ten years from now?" What the normal trader gets from his daily winnings is feedback, the pleasing illusion of progress. At Empirica, there is no feedback. "It's like you're playing the piano for ten years and you still can't play 'Chopsticks,'" Spitznagel says, "and the only thing you have to keep you going is the belief that one day you'll wake up and play like Rachmaninoff." Was it easy knowing that Niederhoffer—who represented everything they thought was wrong—was out there getting rich while they were bleeding away? Of course it wasn't.

If you watched Taleb closely that day, you could see the little ways in which the steady drip of losses takes a toll. He glanced a bit too much at the Bloomberg terminal. He leaned forward a bit too often to see the daily loss count. He succumbs to an array of superstitious tics. If the going is good, he parks in the same space every day; he turned against Mahler because he associates Mahler with last year's long dry spell. "Nassim says all the time that he needs me there, and I believe him," Spitznagel says. He is around to remind Taleb that there is a point to waiting, to help Taleb resist the very human impulse to abandon everything and stanch the pain of losing. "Mark is my cop," Taleb says. So is Pallop: he is there to remind Taleb that Empirica has the intellectual edge.

"The key is not having the ideas but having the recipe to deal with your ideas," Taleb says. "We don't need moralizing. We need a set of tricks." His trick is a protocol that stipulates precisely what has to be done in every situation. "We built the protocol, and the reason we did was to tell the guys, Don't listen to me, listen to the protocol. Now, I have the right to change the protocol, but there is a protocol to changing the protocol. We have to be hard on ourselves to do what we do. The bias we see in Niederhoffer we see in ourselves." At the quant dinner, Taleb devoured his roll, and as the busboy came around with more rolls Taleb shouted out "No, no!" and blocked his plate. It was a never-ending struggle, this battle between head and heart. When the waiter came around with wine, he hastily covered the glass with his hand. When the time came to order, he asked for steak *frites*—without the *frites*, please!—and then immediately tried to hedge his choice by negotiating with the person next to him for a fraction of his *frites*.

The psychologist Walter Mischel has done a series of experiments where he puts a young child in a room and places two cookies in front of him, one small and one large. The child is told that if he wants the small cookie he need only ring a bell and the experimenter will come back into the room and give it to him. If he wants the better treat, though, he has to wait until the experimenter returns on his own, which might be anytime in the next twenty minutes. Mischel has videotapes of six-year-olds, sitting in the room by themselves, staring at the cookies, trying to persuade themselves to wait. One girl starts to sing to herself. She whispers what seems to be the instructions—that she can have the big cookie if she can only wait. She closes her eyes. Then she turns her back on the cookies. Another little boy swings his legs violently back and forth, and then picks up the bell and examines it, trying to do anything but think about the cookie he could get by ringing it. The tapes document the beginnings of discipline and self-control—the techniques we learn to keep our impulses in check—and to watch all the children desperately distracting themselves is to experience the shock of recognition: that's Nassim Taleb!

There is something else as well that helps to explain Taleb's resolve—more than the tics and the systems and the self-denying ordinances. It happened a year or so before he went to see Niederhoffer. Taleb had been working as a trader at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, and he developed a persistently hoarse throat. At first, he thought nothing of it: a hoarse throat was an occupational hazard of spending every day in the pit. Finally, when he moved back to New York, he went to see a doctor, in one of those Upper East Side prewar buildings with a glamorous façade. Taleb sat in the office, staring out at the plain brick of the courtyard, reading the medical diplomas on the wall over and over, waiting and waiting for the verdict. The doctor returned and spoke in a low, grave voice: "I got the pathology report. It's not as bad as it sounds . . ." But, of course, it was; he had throat cancer. Taleb's mind shut down. He left the office. It was raining outside. He walked

Dana Fradon

"Didn't this use to be the time slot for his news briefings?"

and walked and ended up at a medical library. There he read frantically about his disease, the rainwater forming a puddle under his feet. It made no sense. Throat cancer was the disease of someone who has spent a lifetime smoking heavily. But Taleb was young, and he had hardly smoked in his life. His risk of getting throat cancer was one in a hundred thousand, almost unimaginably small. He was a black swan! The cancer is now beaten, but the memory of it is also Taleb's secret, because once you have been a black swan—not just seen one, but lived and faced death as one—it becomes easier to imagine another on the horizon. As the day came to an end, Taleb and his team turned their attention once again to the problem of the square root of *n*. Taleb was back at the whiteboard. Spitznagel was looking on. Pallop was idly peeling a banana. Outside, the sun was beginning to settle behind the trees. "You do a conversion to p_1 and p_2," Taleb said. His marker was once again squeaking across the whiteboard. "We say we have a Gaussian distribution, and you have the market switching from a low-volume regime to a high-volume—p_{21}, p_{22}. You have your eigenvalue . . ." He frowned and stared at his handiwork. The markets were now closed. Empirica had lost money, which meant that somewhere off in Fairfield County, Niederhoffer had no doubt made money. That hurt, but if you steeled yourself, and thought about the problem at hand, and kept in mind that someday the market would do something utterly unexpected because in the world we live in something utterly unexpected *always* happens, then the hurt was not so bad. Taleb eyed his equations on the whiteboard, and arched an eyebrow. It was a very difficult problem. "Where is Dr. Wu? Should we call in Dr. Wu?"

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THE MUSE OF ITEMIZED DEDUCTIONS
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A year after Nassim Taleb came to visit him, Victor Niederhoffer blew up. He sold a very large number of options on the S. & P. index, taking millions of dollars from other traders in exchange for promising to buy a basket of stocks from them at a preset price if the market ever fell below a certain point. It was an unhedged bet, or what was called on Wall Street a "naked put," meaning that he bet everything on one outcome: he bet in favor of the large probability of making a small amount of money, and against the small probability of losing a large amount of money—and he lost. On October 27, 1997, the market plummeted seven per cent, and Niederhoffer had to produce huge amounts of cash to back up all the options he'd sold at pre-crash strike prices. He ran through a hundred and thirty million dollars—his cash reserves, his savings, his other stocks—and when his broker came and asked for still more he didn't have it. In a day, one of the most successful hedge funds in America was wiped out. Niederhoffer was forced to shut down his firm. He had to mortgage his house. He had to borrow money from his children. He had to call Sotheby's and sell his prized silver collection—the massive nineteenth-century Brazilian "sculptural group of victory" made for the Visconde de Figueiredo, the massive silver bowl designed by Tiffany & Company for the James Gordon Bennett Cup yacht race in 1887, and on and on. He stayed away from the auction. He couldn't bear to watch.

"It was one of the worst things that has ever happened to me in my life, right up there with the death of those closest to me," Niederhoffer said recently. It was a Saturday in March, and he was in the library of his enormous house. Two weary-looking dogs wandered in and out. He is a tall man, thick through the upper body and trunk, with a long, imposing face and baleful,

SO, COULD WE HAVE ALL YOUR STUFF AFTER YOU DIE?

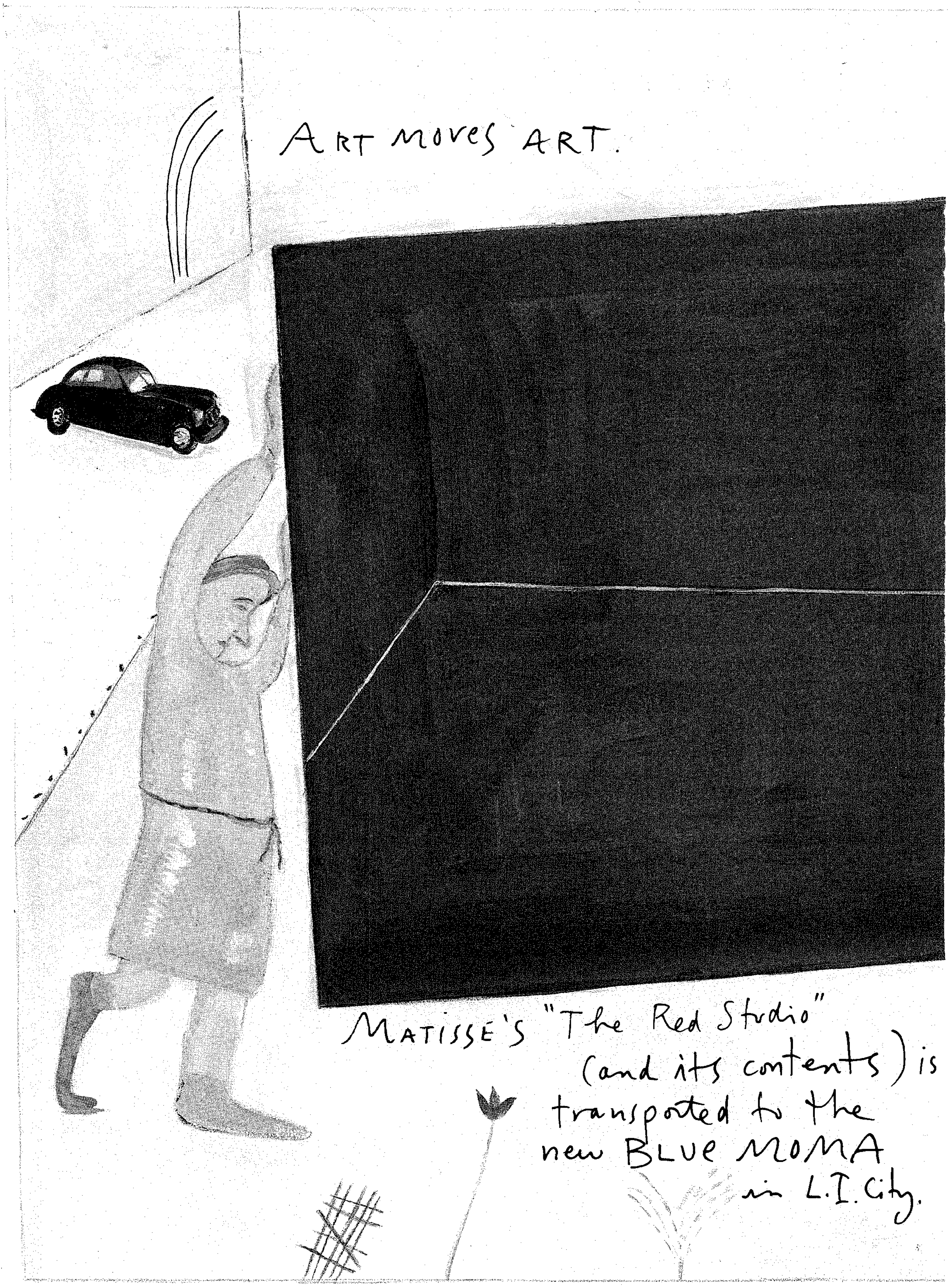
DOCTORS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

hooded eyes. He was shoeless. One collar flap on his shirt was twisted inward, and he looked away as he talked. "I let down my friends. I lost my business. I was a major money manager. Now I pretty much have had to start from ground zero." He paused. "Five years have passed. The beaver builds a dam. The river washes it away, so he tries to build a better foundation, and I think I have. But I'm always mindful of the possibility of more failures." In the distance, there was a knock on the front door. It was a man named Milton Bond, an artist who had come to present Niederhoffer with a painting he had done of Moby Dick ramming the Pequod. It was in the folk-art style that Niederhoffer likes so much, and he went to meet Bond in the foyer, kneeling down in front of the painting as Bond unwrapped it. Niederhoffer has other paintings of the Pequod in his house, and some of the Essex—the ship that inspired Melville's story. In his office, on a prominent wall, is a painting of the Titanic. They were, he said, reminders to stay humble. "One of the reasons I've paid lots of attention to the Essex is that it turns out that the captain of the Essex, as soon as he got back to Nantucket, was given another job," Niederhoffer said. "They thought he did a good job in getting back after the ship was rammed. The captain was asked, 'How could people give you another ship?' And he said, 'I guess on the theory that lightning doesn't strike twice.' It was a fairly random thing. But then he was given the other ship, and that one foundered, too. Got stuck in the ice. At that time, he was a lost man. He wouldn't even let them save him. They had to forcibly remove him from the ship. He spent the rest of his life as a janitor in Nantucket. He became what on Wall Street they call a 'ghost.' " Niederhoffer was back in his study now, his lanky body stretched out, his feet up on the table, his eyes a little rheumy. "You see? I can't afford to fail a second time. Then I'll be a total washout. That's the significance of the Essex."

A month or so before Niederhoffer blew up, Taleb had dinner with him at a restaurant in Westport, and Niederhoffer told him that he had been selling naked puts. You can imagine the two of them across the table from each other, Niederhoffer explaining that his speculation was an acceptable risk, that the odds of the market going down so heavily that he would be wiped out were minuscule, and Taleb listening and shaking his head, and thinking about black swans. "I was depressed when I left him," Taleb said. "Here is a guy who goes out and hits a thousand backhands. He plays chess like his life depends on it. Here is a guy who, whatever he wakes up in the morning and decides to do, he does better than anyone else. I was talking to my hero. . . ." This was the reason Taleb didn't want to be Niederhoffer when Niederhoffer was at his height—the reason Taleb didn't want the silver and the house and the tennis matches with George Soros. He could see all too clearly where it might end up. In his mind's eye, he could envision Niederhoffer borrowing money from his children, and selling his silver, and talking in a hollow voice about letting down his friends, and Taleb did not know if he had the strength to live with that possibility. Unlike Niederhoffer, Taleb never thought he was invincible. You couldn't if you had watched your homeland blow up, and had been the one nonsmoker in a hundred thousand who gets throat cancer. For Taleb there was never any alternative to the painful process of insuring himself against catastrophe.

This kind of caution does not seem heroic, of course. It seems like the joyless prudence of the accountant and the Sunday-school teacher. The truth is that we are drawn to the Niederhoffers of this world because we are all, at heart, like Niederhoffer: we associate the willingness to risk great failure—and the ability to climb back from catastrophe—with courage. But in this we are wrong. That is the lesson of Nassim Taleb and Victor Niederhoffer, and also the lesson of our volatile times. There is more courage and heroism in defying the human impulse, in taking the purposeful and painful steps to prepare for the unimaginable.

Last fall, Niederhoffer sold a large number of options, betting that the markets would be quiet, and they were, until out of nowhere two planes crashed into the World Trade Center. "I was exposed. It was nip and tuck." Niederhoffer shook his head, because there was no way to have anticipated September 11th. "That was a totally unexpected event." ♦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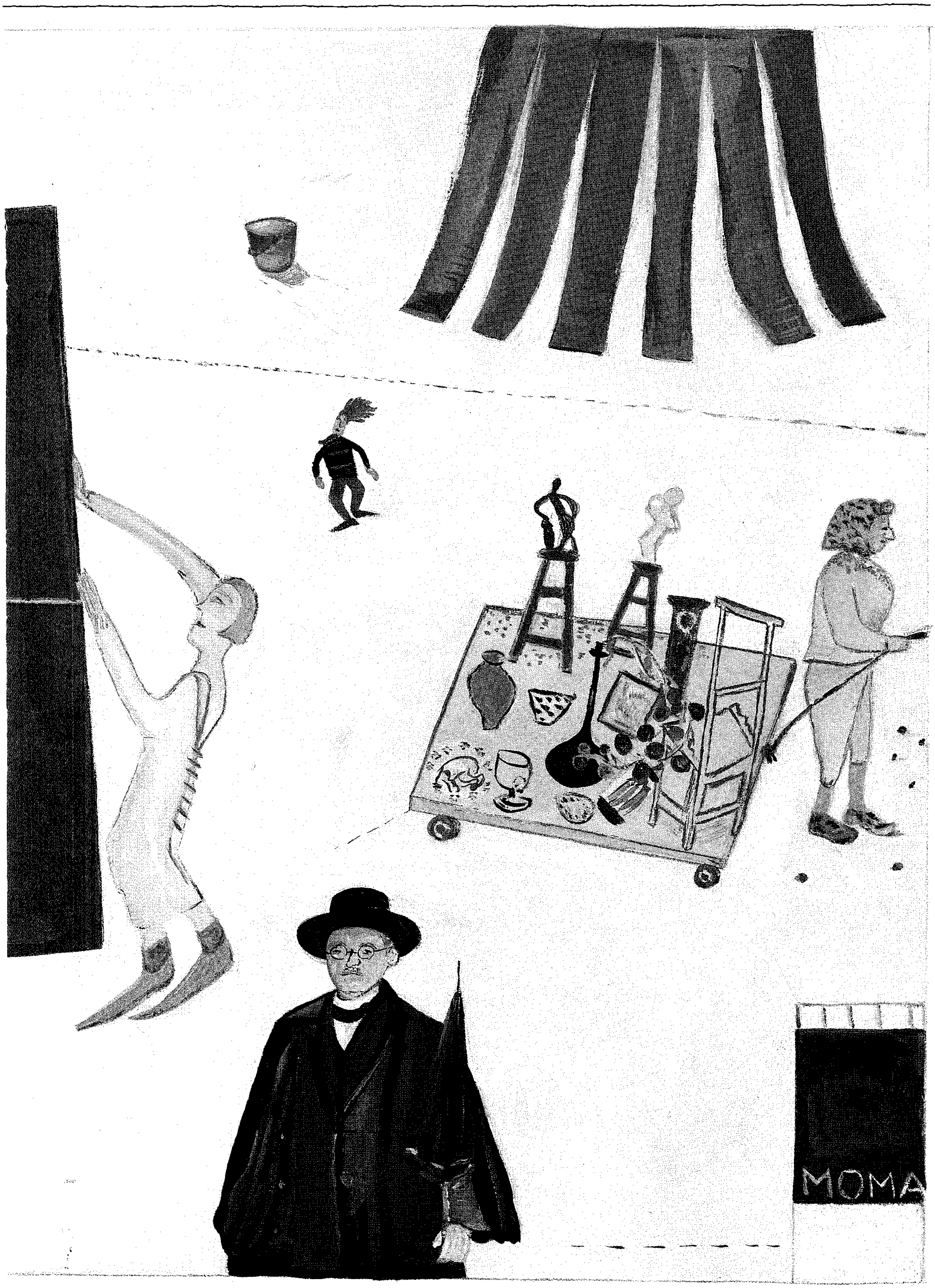

M. KALMAN

FICTION

THE PERFORMANCE

BY ARTHUR MILLER

Harold May would have been about thirty-five when I met him. With his blondish hair parted in the exact middle, and his horn-rimmed glasses and remarkably round boyish eyes, he resembled Harold Lloyd, the famous bespectacled movie comic with the surprised look. When I think of May, I see a man with rosy cheeks, in a gray suit with white pinstripes and a red-and-blue striped bow tie—a dancer, slender, snugly built, light on his feet and, like a lot of dancers, wrapped up (mummified, you might say) in his art. So he seemed at first, anyway. I see us in a midtown drugstore, the kind that at that time, the forties, had tables where people could sit around for an unemployed hour with their sodas and sundaes. May was wanting to tell a long and involved story, and I wasn't sure why he was bothering but I gradually caught on that it was to interest me in doing a feature about him. My old friend Ralph Barton (né Berkowitz) brought him to me thinking I might make use of his weird story, even though he knew that I had left journalism by then and was no longer sitting around in drugstores and bars, having become sufficiently known as a writer to be embarrassed by strangers accosting me in restaurants or on the street. This was probably in the spring, only two years after the end of the war.

As Harold May told it that afternoon, he had been employed only fitfully back in the mid-thirties, having built a tap-dance act that had played the Palace twice. While he almost always got excited *Variety* notices, he could never really escape the devoted but small audiences in places like Queens, Toledo, Ohio, and Erie or Tonawanda, New York. "If they know how to fit things together they tend to like watching tap," he said, and it pleased him that steelworkers particularly loved the act, as well as machinists, glassblowers—almost anybody who appreciated skills. By '36, though, Harold, convinced that his head was bumping the ceiling of his career, was so depressed that when an offer came to work in Hungary he snapped it up, although uncertain where that country might be located. He soon learned that a so-called vaudeville wheel existed in Budapest, Bucharest, Athens, and half a dozen other East European cities, with Vienna the big prestige booking that would give him lots of publicity. Once established, an act could work almost year-round, returning again and again to the same clubs. "They like things not to change much," he said. Tap, however, was a real novelty, a purely American dance unknown in Europe, invented as it had been by Negroes in the South, and a lot of Europeans were charmed by what they took to be its amusingly optimistic American ambience.

Harold worked the wheel, he explained to me over the white-marble-topped table, for some six or eight months. "The work was steady, the money was decent, and in some places, like Bulgaria, we were practically stars. Got to go to dinners in a couple of castles, with women falling all over us, and great wine. I was as happy as I was ever going to get," he said.

With his little troupe of three men and a woman and himself plus a pickup piano player or, in some places, a small band, he had a mobile and efficient business. Still young and unmarried, with his whole short life concentrated on his legs, his shoes, and persisting dreams of glory, he surprised himself now by enjoying sightseeing in the cities of the wheel and picking up odd bits about European history and art. He had only a high-school diploma from Evander Childs and had never had time to think about much beyond his next gig, so Europe opened his eyes to a past that he had hardly imagined existed.

In Budapest one night, contentedly removing his makeup in his decrepit La Babalu Club dressing room, he was surprised by the appearance in his doorway of a tall, well-dressed gentleman who bowed slightly from the waist and in German-accented English introduced himself and asked deferentially if he could have a few minutes of May's precious time. Harold invited the German to have a seat on a shredded pink satin chair.

The German, about forty-five, had gleaming, beautifully coiffed silver hair and wore a fine, greenish, heavyweight suit and black high-top shoes. His name was Damian Fugler, he said, and he had come in his official capacity as Cultural Attaché of the German Embassy in Budapest. His English, though accented, was flawlessly exact.

"I have had the pleasure of attending three of your performances now," Fugler began in a rolling baritone, "and first of all wish to pay my respects to you as a fine artist." Nobody had ever called Harold an artist.

"Well, thanks," he managed to say. "I appreciate the compliment." I could imagine the inflation he must have felt, this pink-cheeked young guy out of Berea, Ohio, taking praise from this elegant European with his high-top shoes.

"I myself have performed with the Stuttgart Opera, although not as a singer, of course, but a 'spear-carrier,' as we call it. That was quite a time ago, when I was much younger." Fugler permitted himself a forgiving smile at his youthful pranks. "But I will get down to business—I have been authorized to invite you, Mr. May, to perform in Berlin. My department is prepared to pay your transportation costs as well as hotel expenses."

The breathtaking idea of a government—any government—having an interest in tap dancing was, of course, way beyond imagining for Harold, and it took a moment to digest or even to believe.

"Well, I really don't know what to

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say. Like where do I play, a club or what?"

"It would be in the Kick Club. You must have heard of it?"

Harold had heard of the Kick Club as one of Berlin's classiest. His heart was banging. But his booking experience warned him to circle around the proposal. "And how long an engagement would this be?" he asked.

"Most probably one performance."

"One?"

"We would require only one, but you would be free to arrange more with the management, provided, of course, they wish you to continue. We are prepared to pay you two thousand dollars for the evening, if that would be satisfactory."

Two thousand for one night! This was practically a normal year's take. Harold's head was spinning. He knew he ought to be asking questions, but which? "And you? Excuse me, but you are what again?"

Fugler removed a beautiful black leather card case from his breast pocket and handed Harold a card, which he tried unsuccessfully to focus on once he glimpsed the sharply embossed eagle clutching a swastika, which flew up like a dart into his brain.

"Could I let you know tomorrow?" he began, but Fugler's mellow baritone voice quickly cut him off.

"I'm afraid you would have to leave sometime tomorrow. I have arranged with the management here to free you from your contract, should you find that agreeable."

Free him from his contract! "I felt," he said to me over his half-empty chocolate-soda glass, "that unbeknownst to me people had been discussing me in some high office somewhere. It was scary, but you can't help feeling important," he said, and laughed like a wicked adolescent.

"May I ask why so soon?" he asked Fugler.

"I'm afraid I am not at liberty to say more than that my superiors will not have the time to see your performance after Thursday, at least not for several weeks or possibly months." Suddenly the man was leaning forward over Harold's knees, his face nearly touching Harold's hand, his voice lowered to a whisper. "This may change your life, Mr. May. You cannot possibly hesitate."

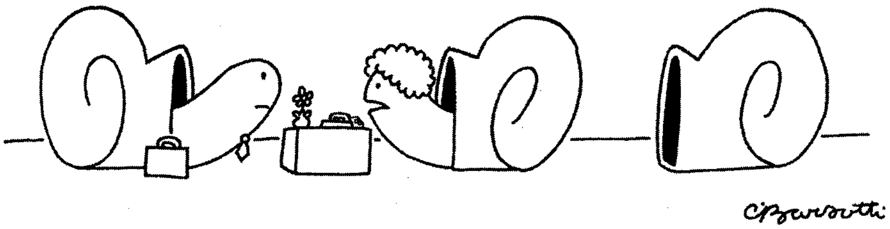
With two grand dangling before him, Harold heard himself saying, "All right." The whole encounter was so weird that he immediately began to backtrack and ask for more time to decide, but the German was gone. In his hand he saw a five-hundred-dollar bill and vaguely recalled the accented baritone voice saying, "As a deposit. Berlin then! *Auf Wiedersehen*."

"He'd never even offered me a contract," Harold told us, "just left the money."

He barely slept that night, castigating himself. "You like to think you're in charge of yourself, but this Fugler was like a hurricane." What particularly bothered him now, he said, was his having agreed to the single performance. What was that about? "Over the months, I'd gotten used to not bothering to understand what was going on around me—I mean, I didn't know a word of Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, German—but a single performance? I couldn't figure out what it could mean."

And why the big hurry? "I was stumped," he said. "I wished to God I'd never taken the money. At the same time, I couldn't help being curious."

His mind was somewhat eased by the troupe's delight at getting out of the Balkans, and at his sharing some of his advance among them, and on the train north they were jounced with life and this cockeyed adventure. The prospect of playing Berlin—the capital of Europe, second only to Paris—was like going to a party. Harold ordered champagne and steaks and tried to relax among his dancers and smooth out his anxieties. As the train clanked northward, he con-



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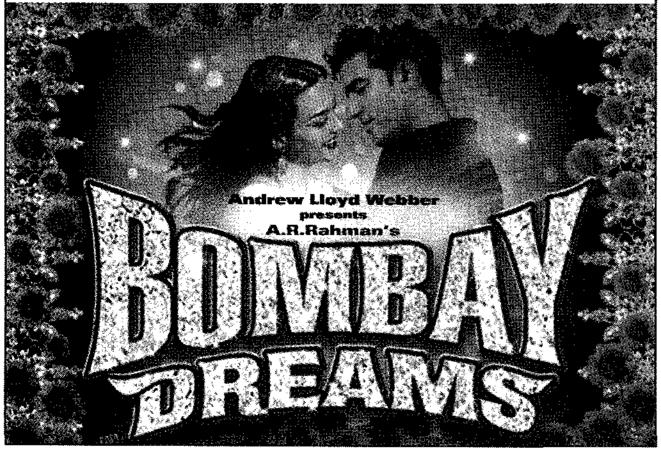
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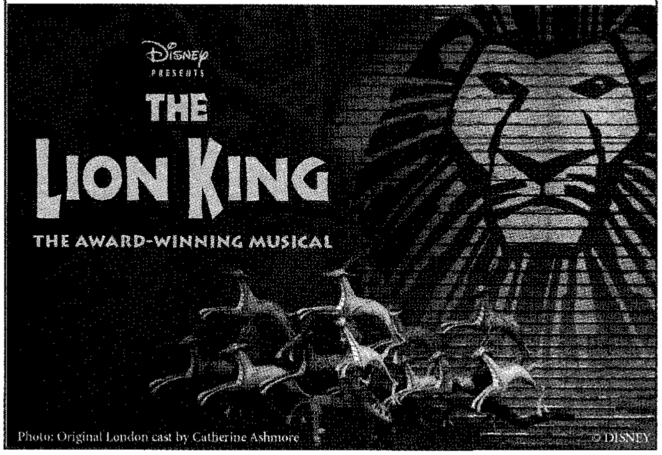

Photo: Original London cast by Catherine Ashmore © DISNEY

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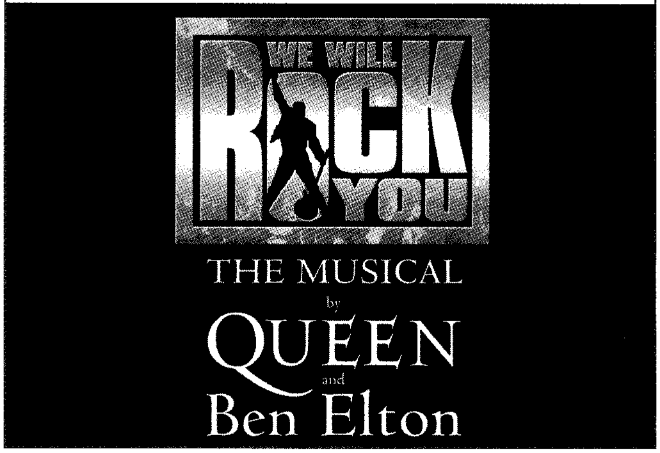

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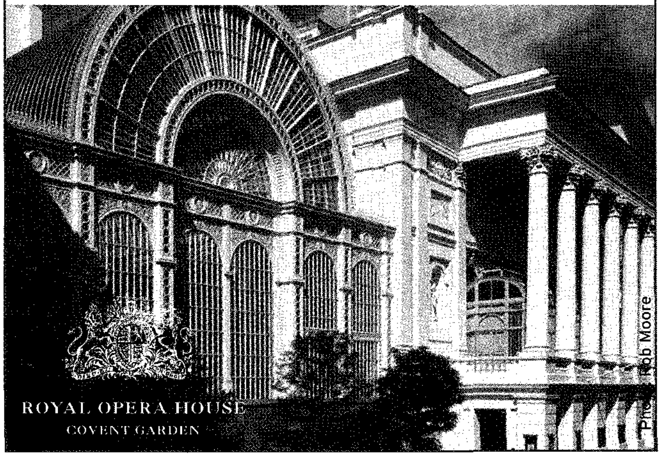

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The Rubens at the Palace, London

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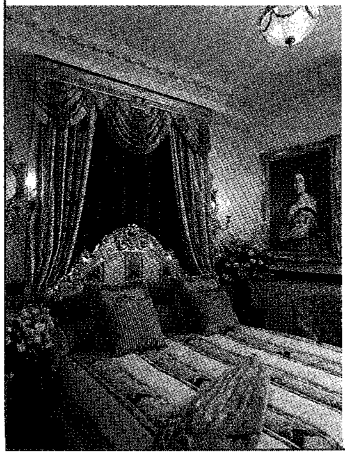

The Rubens
AT THE PALACE

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trasted his luck with his probable situation had he stayed in New York, with its lines of unemployed and the unbroken grip of the American slump.

When the train stopped at the German border, an officer opened the door of his compartment, which Harold shared with Benny Worth, who had been with him the longest, and two Romanians, who slept almost continuously, but did waken occasionally, smile briefly, and return to their dreams. The officer, Harold thought, scowled at him as he opened his passport. He had been scowled at by border guards any number of times on this tour, but this German's scowl touched something very deep in his body. It was more than his suddenly remembering that he was Jewish; he had never really had a problem with being Jewish, especially since his blond hair, blue eyes, and generally happy nature had never invited the usual reactions of the era. It was, rather, that until now he had managed to erase almost totally the stories he had read a year or so earlier about the young German government's having staged rallies against Jews, driving them out of businesses and professions, closing synagogues and forcing many to emigrate. On the other hand, Benny Worth, who called himself a Communist and had all kinds of information that never appeared in regular papers like the New York *Times*, had told him that the Nazis had been tamping down on the anti-Jewish stuff this year so as not to look nasty for the Olympic tourists. In any case, none of this had applied to him personally. "I'd heard some bad stories of Romanian incidents, too, but I never saw anything, so I could never keep them in my head," he explained. I could understand this; after all, he'd had no verbal contact with his audiences and could not read local papers, so that a certain remoteness was wrapped around anything real going on in the cities he had been playing.

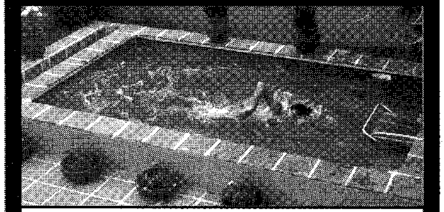
In fact, he said, his one distinct impression of Hitler had come from a newsreel that showed him walking out of the Olympics a few months earlier when Jesse Owens, the Negro runner, mounted the platform to accept his fourth gold medal. "Which was pretty bad sportsmanship," he said, "but let's face it, something like that could have happened in lots of places." The truth was, Harold had a hard time concentrating on politics at all. His life was tap, nailing his next gig, keeping edible food on his table and his troupe from splitting up and forcing him to train new people in his routines. And, of course, with his American passport in his pocket, he could always pick up and pull out and go back to the Balkans or even home, if worst came to worst.

They arrived in Berlin on Tuesday evening and were met as they stepped down from the train by two men, one in a suit resembling Fugler's but blue instead of green, and the other in a black uniform with white piping down the edges of the lapels. "Mr. Fugler is awaiting you," the uniformed one said, and Harold caught his own importance in this announcement and could hardly control the thrill it gave him; normally he and his troupe emerged from trains hauling their heavy leather luggage while struggling with some idiotic foreign language to direct porters and hail cabs, usually in the rain. Here, they were led into a Mercedes, which gravely proceeded to the Adlon Hotel, the best in Berlin and maybe in all Europe. By the time he was finishing his dinner of oysters, osso buco, potato pancakes, and Riesling alone in his room, Harold had buried his qualms in imaginings of what he might do with his newfound money and he was ready to go to work.

Fugler showed up at breakfast next morning and sat down in his room for a few minutes. They would perform at midnight, he said, and would have the club for rehearsals until eight that evening, when the regular show started. This was a slightly more excited Fugler; "He looked like he'd throw his arms around me any minute," Harold said.

"I was getting along so good with Fugler," Harold said, "that I figured it was time to ask who we were supposed to be dancing for. But he just smiled and said security considerations forbade that kind of information and he hoped I'd understand. Frankly, Benny Worth had mentioned that the Duke of Windsor was in town, so we wondered if maybe it was him, seeing he was pretty snug with Hitler."

Breakfast done, they were driven to the club, where they confronted the six-piece house band, whose only member



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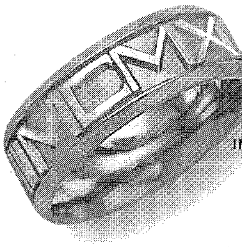

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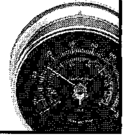

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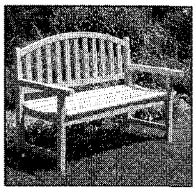

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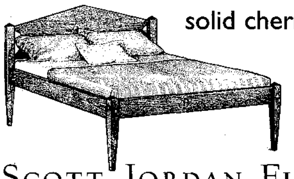

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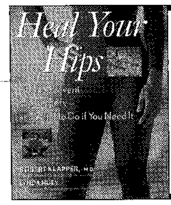

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under fifty was Mohammed the Syrian pianist, a sharp young sport with fantastically long brown fingers covered with rings, who knew some English and translated Harold's remarks to the rest of the band. Relishing his new authority, Mohammed proceeded to take revenge on the other players, all Germans, whom he had been trying for months, unsuccessfully, to bring up to tempo. They knew "Swanee River," so Harold had them try that as an accompaniment, but they were hopelessly slack, so he managed to drive off the violinist and the accordionist as diplomatically as possible and worked with the drum and piano and it was tolerable. Waiters and kitchen help started arriving at noon, and he had an amazed audience standing around polishing silver as he went through the troupe's stuff. To dance before applauding waiters was a new experience, and the troupe began to feel golden. They were served a broiled-trout lunch in the empty room, another first, with wine, freshly baked hard rolls, and chocolate cake with marvellous coffee, and by half past two were sharp on their feet but sleepy. A car brought them back to the Adlon for a nap. They would have dinner at the club, free, of course.

Harold for a long time lay motionless in a six-foot marble tub in his habitual pre-performance hot bath. "The faucets were gold-plated, the towels were yards long." It was the waiters' unprecedented near-reverence for him and the troupe that forced him to suspect that his audience tonight had to be some very high-level Nazi political people. Hitler? He prayed not. His own stupidity at having failed to insist on knowing appalled him. He should have deduced this problem the moment Fugler had said it was to be a single performance. Once again, what I imagined must have been his lifelong curse of timidity soured Harold's mind. Sliding down the bath until his head was underwater, he said, he tried to drown but finally decided otherwise. What if they discovered he was Jewish? The images of persecution, which he had seen in newspapers earlier this year, marched out of the locked closet hidden in a recess of his mind. But they couldn't possibly do something to an *American*. Blessing his passport, he got out of the tub and, dripping wet, fear in his belly, he checked that it was still in his jacket pocket. The plush towel on his skin somehow made it even more absurd that he should be feeling anxiety rather than happy anticipation as a command performance neared. Standing at a tall, satin-draped window, tying his bow tie, he stared down at the busy thoroughfare, at this very modern city with nicely dressed people pausing at store windows, greeting each other, tipping hats, and waiting for traffic lights to change, and felt the craziness of his position—he was like a scared cat chased up a tree by some spectre of danger it had glimpsed which might have been only an awning snapping in the breeze. "Still, I remembered Benny Worth's saying the Nazis' days were numbered because the workers would soon be knocking them out of office—so all hope wasn't lost."

He decided to gather the troupe in his dressing room. Paul Garner and Benny Worth stood in their tuxedos and Carol Conway in her blazing-red filmy number, all of them a little edgy since there was no precedent for Harold's summoning them before a show. "I'm not guaranteeing this, but I have an idea we are dancing for Mr. Hitler tonight." They nearly swelled with the pleasure of their success. Benny Worth, a born team player, his gravelly voice burgeoning through his cigar smoke, clenched his heavy right fist, flashing a diamond ring with which he had more than once wounded interlopers, and said, "Don't worry about that son of a bitch."

Carol, always a quick weeper, looked at Harold with waters threatening her eyes. "But do they know you're—"

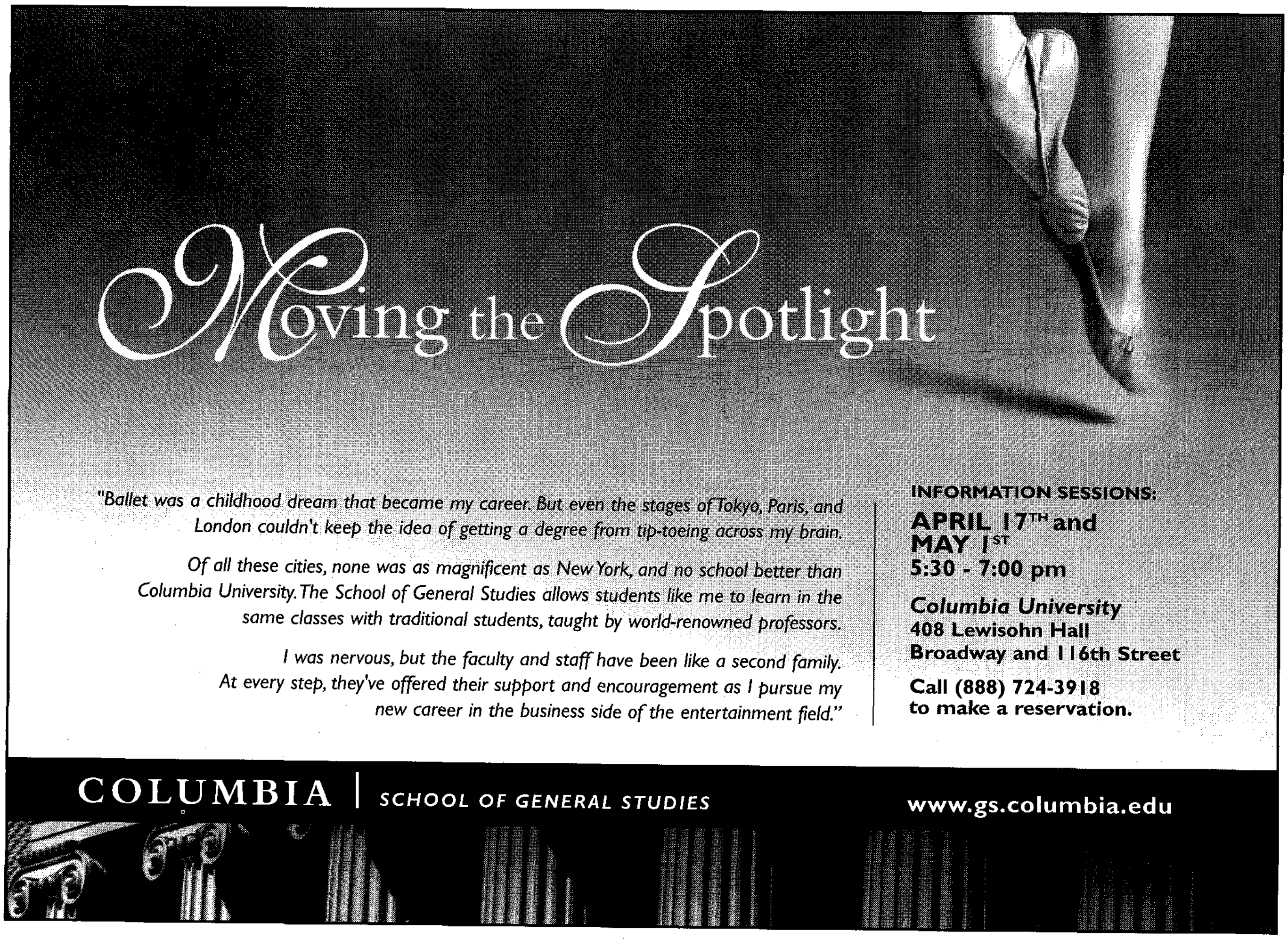
"No," he cut her off. "But we'll get out of here tomorrow and go back to Budapest. I just didn't want you to be thrown off—in case you see him sitting there. Just play it the same as usual, and tomorrow we're back on the train."

A massive chandelier hung over the night club's circular stage, a blaze of twinkling lights which irritated Harold, who distrusted anything hanging over his head when he danced. The pink walls had a Moorish motif, the tabletops were grass green. They watched through peepholes from behind the orchestra as, promptly at midnight, Herr Bix, the manager, stopped the band, stood center stage, and apologized to the packed room for interrupting the dance, assured the customers of his gratitude for their having come this evening and announced that it was his "duty" to request everyone to leave. Since normal closing time was around two, everyone imagined an emergency of some sort, and the use of the word "duty" suggested that this emergency involved the regime, so that with only a murmur of surprise the several hundred patrons gathered up their things and filed out into the street.

Some strolled off, others entered cabs, and the stragglers halted at the curb to watch, awed, as the famous long Mercedes appeared and turned in to the alley next to the club, preceded and followed by three or four black cars filled with men.

Through the peepholes, Harold and the troupe watched, amazed, as twenty or so uniformed officers spread out around the Leader, whose table had been moved to within a dozen feet of the stage. With him sat the enormously fat and easily recognized Göring, and another officer, and Fugler. "In fact, they were almost all enormous men; at least, they looked enormous in their uniforms," Harold said. Waiters were filling all their glasses with water, reminding Harold, also practically a nondrinker, of Hitler's reported vegetarianism. Bix, the Kick manager, who had scurried around backstage, now touched Harold's shoulder. Mohammed, no longer in his usual spineless slope over the keyboard but bolt upright, caught the signal from Bix and, with his ringed fingers and with the drummer backing up with his brush, went into "Tea for Two," and Harold was on. The shape of the number could not have been simpler; Harold soloed soft-shoe, went into the shuffle, then, on the third chorus, Worth and Garner cakewalked in from left and right, and finally Carol, as happy temptress, swooned pliably around the formations that were made and unmade and made again. Within a minute, it was obvious to the astonished Harold as he glanced at Hitler's dreaded face that the man was experiencing some profound kind of wild astonishment. The troupe went into the stomp, shoes drumming the stage floor, and Hitler seemed transfixed now, swept up in the booming rhythms, both clenched fists pressing down on the tabletop, his neck stretched taut, his mouth slightly agape. "I thought we were looking at an orgasm," Harold said. Göring, who "began to look like a big fat baby," was lightly tapping the table with his palm and occasionally laughing delightedly in his condescending fashion. And, of course, their retinue, cued by their superiors' clear approval of the performers, were unleashed, ho-ho-ing in competition over who would show the most unmitigated enjoyment. Harold, helplessly enjoying his own triumph, was flying off the tips of his shoes. After so much trepidation, this surprising flow of brutal appreciation blew away his last restraint and his art's power took absolute command of his soul.

"You couldn't help feeling terrific," Harold said, and a curiously mixed look of embarrassment and victorious pleasure flushed his face. "I mean, once you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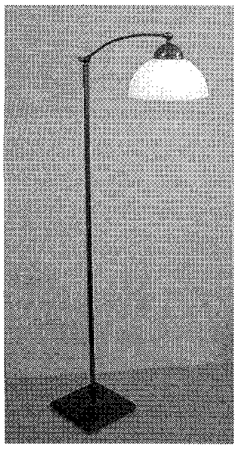
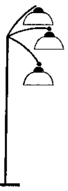
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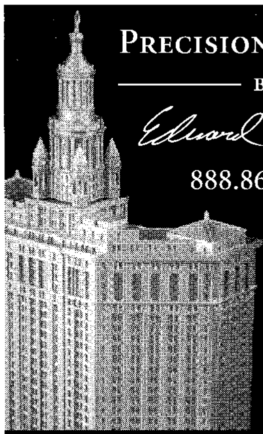
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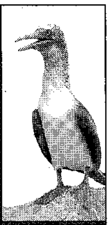
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saw Hitler in the throes, he was like . . . I don't know . . . a girl. I know it sounds crazy, but he almost looked delicate, in a kind of monstrous way." I thought he was dissatisfied with this explanation, but he broke off and said, "Anyway, we had them all in the palm of our hands and it felt goddam wonderful, after being scared half to death." And he gave a little empty laugh that I couldn't quite interpret.

The routines, repeated three times at the order of the more and more involved Leader, took close to two hours to finish. As the troupe took bows, Hitler, eyes shining, rose from his chair and gave them a two-inch nod, his accolade, then sat, his chaste authority descending upon him again. Fugler and he now busily whispered together. The room fell silent. No one knew what to do. The retinue picked at the tablecloths and sipped water, staring about aimlessly. On the stage, the troupe stood, shifting from hip to hip. Worth, after several minutes, started to walk away in a silent show of defiance, but Bix rushed to him and led him back to the others. Hitler was clearly impassioned with Fugler, time and again pointing at Harold, who stood waiting with the troupe a few feet away. The dancers' hands were clasped behind their backs. Carol Conway, terrified, kept defensively nodding, coquettishly lifting and lowering her eyebrows toward the uniformed men, who gallantly smiled back.

More than ten minutes had gone by when Fugler gestured to Harold to join them at the table. Fugler's hand was trembling, his lips cracked with dryness, his eyes stared like a sleepwalker's; Harold saw in the man's tremendous success tonight the volcanic power Hitler wielded, and once again was touched by fear and pride at having tamed it. "You could laugh at him from a distance," Harold said of Hitler, "but up close, let me tell you, you felt a lot better off if he liked you." In his adolescent face I began to see something like anguish as he smiled at his remark.

Fugler cleared his throat and faced Harold, his manner distinctly formal. "We shall speak further in the morning, but Herr Hitler wishes to propose to you that . . ." Fugler paused, said Harold, to compose the Leader's message carefully in his mind. Hitler, slipping on a pair of soft brown leather gloves, watched him with a certain excited intensity. "In principle, he wishes you to create a school here in Berlin to teach German people how to tap-dance. This school, as he envisions it, would be set up under a new government department which he hopes you will take charge of until you have trained someone to take your place. Your dancing has deeply impressed him. He believes that the combination it offers of vigorous healthy exercise, strict discipline, and simplicity would be excellent for the well-being of the population. He foresees that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Germans could be dancing together at the same time, in halls or stadiums, all over the country. This would be inspiring. It would strengthen the iron bonds that unify the German people while raising up their health standards. There are other details, but this is the gist of the Leader's message."

With which Fugler, with military sternness, indicated to Hitler that he had finished, and Hitler stood and offered his gloved hand to Harold, who scrambled to his feet, too nervous to say anything at all. Hitler took a step away from the table, but then, with a sudden birdlike snap of his head, turned back to Harold and with pursed lips smiled at him and left, his small army behind him, their boots thrumming on the wooden floor.

Telling this, Harold May was, of course, laughing at times, but at other times one could see that he still had not quite shed the awesome distinction implicit in the story. Hitler at the time of the telling was only two years dead, and his menace, which had hung over us all for more than a decade, had not completely disappeared. His victims, so to speak, were still in fresh graves. Repulsive as he had been, and grateful as all of us were for his death, his presence was like a disease we had had to focus on for too long for it to heal and vanish so quickly. That he had been human enough to lose himself in Harold's performance, and had even had artistic aspirations, was not a comfortable thought, and I listened with a certain uneasiness as Harold pushed on with the tale. He looked different now than he had at the start, seeming almost to have aged in the telling of the story.

"Fugler showed up for breakfast again next morning," Harold said, "a totally changed man. The fucking Führer had offered me a *department!* In *person!* And my hit had also raised Fugler a couple of notches in the hierarchy, because the whole audition had been his idea. So the both of us were super *hoch*, big shots. He had a hard time staying in his seat as we went over the next steps. I would have the pick of Berlin spaces for the school, since my authority came directly from the top, and somebody from some other department would shortly be coming by to discuss my salary, but he thought at least fifteen thousand a year was possible. I nearly fell over. A Cadillac was around a thousand in those days. Fifteen was immense money. I had blasted the ball out of the park."

With a school and immense money on offer, he was handed a dilemma, he went on. He could, of course, simply leave the country. But that would mean tossing away enough money to buy himself a house and a car and maybe seriously think about finding a girl and marrying. He now began trying to explain himself more deeply. "I've always had a hard time with major decisions," he said to me, "and of course Hitler'd been in office only a few years and the real truth about the camps and all hadn't hit us yet, although what was already known was bad enough. Not that I'm excusing myself, but I just couldn't honestly say yes or no. I mean, going back to the Balkans wasn't exactly Hollywood, and knocking around in the States again was something I didn't want to think about."

"You mean you accepted the offer?" I asked, smiling in embarrassment.

"I didn't do anything for a couple of days except walk a lot in the city. And nobody was bothering me. My people were enjoying Berlin and, I don't know, I guess I was busy full time trying to figure myself out. I mean, if you were walking around in Berlin just then nothing was happening. It was no different from London or Paris except that it was cleaner. And maybe you'd notice a few more uniformed men here and there." He looked directly at me. "I mean, that's just how it was," he said.

"I understand," I said. But Hitler was too horrible a figure; I couldn't appreciate even the most perverse attraction to him or his Berlin. And it could be that that thought was what made me ask myself for the first time whether Harold had done something utterly outrageous, like . . . falling in love with the monster?

Harold stared out at the street through the drugstore window. I had the feeling that he hadn't quite realized how the story would sound to others. It was partly the particular character of the late forties; for some, but by no means for everyone, there was still an echo of wartime anti-Fascist heroism in the air; on Paris street corners, stone tablets were still being cemented into buildings, commemorating the heroism of some anti-Nazi Frenchman or -woman who had been shot on the spot by Germans. But of course most people, Harold probably among them, were oblivious of these ceremonies and their moral and political significance.

"Go ahead," I said. "What happened

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MACY'S ELEGY

Once—my delusional father.

His "oracle" had ordered:
Scrap the gray coat; get the brown coat.

I could not help him on the buy-and-sell floor.

Now—the gourmet fast food:
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A man and son eating salmon.

Masonic ring like my father's:
compass, right-angled ruler—encircling a diamond.

Brother in the fraternity of Father.
Anonymous, infinite as one.

Thwarting hunger, slaking thirst.

As the adepts teach: *Praise where you are.*

—*Hugh Seidman*

next? It's a great story." I reassured him as warmly as I could.

He seemed to open a bit to my acceptance. "Well," he said, "about four or five days later, Fugler showed up again."

Fugler was still in the glow. Talks were proceeding about how and where to set up the school. "Then," said Harold, "without making anything much of it, he told me that of course part of the routine was that every man in an executive cultural position had to pass a 'racial certification program.' " Returning to his ironical grin, Harold said, "I had to get measured for Aryan." He was to accompany Fugler to a Professor Martin Ziegler's laboratory for a routine check.

With this news, Harold found himself drifting into an even more uncomfortable position. "It's hard to explain; I'd ended up in this deal where I knew I'd be having to leave Germany. Exactly when and how I wasn't sure. But being examined seemed to put me in a different position. Because I'd be deceiving them. I mean, they could cook that into a stew, claiming that I was an enemy and they had to do something about me, passport or no passport. I'd gotten so I could smell violence in the air."

But he did not flee. "I don't know," he replied when I asked him why. "I guess I was just waiting to see what would happen. And, look, I don't deny it, the money'd dug itself into my head. Although—" Again he broke off, dissatisfied with that explanation.

In any case, as he got into Fugler's car he began to fear that he might be even more vulnerable because he had come to Hitler's personal and affectionate notice. "It was almost like . . . I don't know, like he was watching me. Maybe because we'd met, I'd shaken his actual hand," he said, suggesting that he also had a vague feeling of obligation to Hitler, who, after all, was his would-be benefactor—whom he had misled.

Watching Harold now, I found things simplified; there was certainly a bewildering mix of feelings in him, but I thought I saw a clear straight line underneath—Hitler had esteemed him so feelingly, in a sense had loved him or at least his talent, and more ardently than anyone anywhere else had ever come close to equalling. I wondered if that performance had been the high point of

a world at stake

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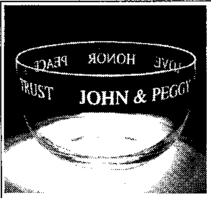

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his art, perhaps of his life, a hook he had swallowed that he could still not cough up. After all, he had never become a star and probably would never again feel the burning heat of that magical light upon his face.

In the car, sitting beside Fugler on the way to his exam, and looking through the window at the great city and the ordinary things people did on the street, Harold felt that everything he saw seemed to signify, was suddenly like a painting, as though it were all supposed to *mean* something. But what? "You had to wonder," he said, "did they all feel like this? Like they were in a fishbowl and up above there was somebody looking down who *cared*?"

I couldn't believe my ears—Hitler *cared*?

Harold's eyes now were filled. He said that when he looked at Fugler sitting comfortably beside him smoking his English cigarette, and then at the people on the streets, "everything was so fucking *normal*. Maybe that's what was so frightening about it. Like you're drowning in a dream and people are playing cards on the beach a few yards away. I mean, here I'm in a car going to have my nose measured or something, or my cock inspected, and this was absolutely normal, too. I mean, these were not some fucking moon people, these people had *refrigerators!*"

Anger seemed to speak in him for the first time, but not, I thought, at the Germans particularly. It was, rather, at some transcendent situation that was beyond defining. Of course, his nose was small, a pug nose, and circumcision had become common among Germans by that time, so he had little to fear from a physical examination. And, as though reading my thought, he added, "Not that I was afraid of an exam, but . . . I don't know . . . that I was *involved* with this kind of shit—" He broke off again, again dissatisfied with his explanation, I thought.

The walls of Eugenics Professor Ziegler's inner office, in a modern building, were loaded with heavy medical volumes and plaster casts of heads—Chinese, African, European—on shelves behind sliding glass. Glancing around, Harold felt surrounded by an audience that had died. The Professor himself was on the tiny side, a nearsighted, rather obsequious scholar, hardly up to Har-

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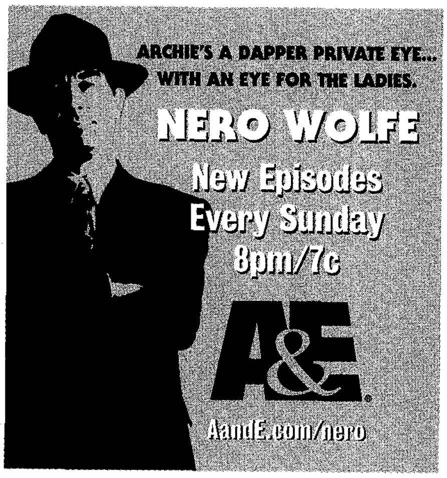
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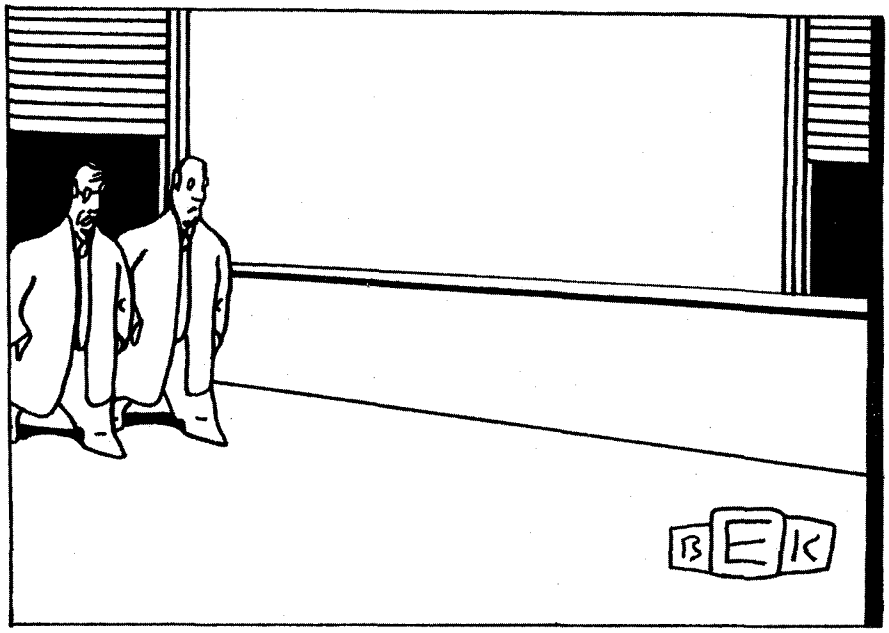

"It's amazing what a difference three hundred billion dollars makes."

• •

old's armpits, who hurriedly ushered him to a chair while Fugler waited in the outer office. The Professor ticktacked around on the white linoleum floor gathering notebook, pencils, and fountain pen, while assuring Harold, "Only a few minutes and we can finish. Indeed, this is quite exciting, your school."

Now, sitting down on a high stool facing Harold, notebook on his lap, the Professor noted the satisfactory blue of his eyes and the blond hair, turned his palms up, apparently looking for a telltale sign of something, and finally announced, "We shall take some measurements, please." Drawing a large pair of brass calipers out of his desk drawer, he held one side under Harold's chin and the other on the crown of his head, and noted down the distance between them. The same with the width of his cheekbones, the height of his forehead from the bridge of his nose, the width of his mouth and jaws, the length of his nose and ears, and their positions relative to the tip of his nose and crown of his head. Each span was carefully plotted in a leather-bound notebook, as Harold sat trying to think of how to get hold of a railroad timetable without being noticed, and how to create an unobjectionable reason for having to go to Paris that very evening.

The whole session had taken about an hour, including an inspection of his penis, which, though circumcised, was of little interest to the Professor, who, with one eyebrow critically raised, had bent forward to look at the member for a moment, "like a bird with a worm in front of him." Harold laughed. Finally, looking up from the notes spread out on his desk, the Professor announced with a decided clink of professional self-appreciation in his voice, "I am concluding zat you are a very strong and distinct type of the Aryan race, and I wish to offer you my best wishes for suczess."

Fugler, of course, had never had any doubts on this score, especially not now, when he was being credited by the regime as the creator of this astonishing program. Imitating Fugler's smooth accent, Harold told how, on the way back in the car, he had become rhapsodic about tap's promising to "transform Germany into a community not only of producers and soldiers but artists, the noblest and most eternal spirits of humanity," and so on. Turning to Harold beside him, he said, "I must tell you—but may I call you Harold now?"

"Yes. Sure."

"Harold, this adventure—if I may call it so—coming to such a triumphant conclusion, suggests to me what an artist must feel when finishing a composition or painting or any work of art. That he has immortalized himself. I hope I am not embarrassing you."

"No—no. I see what you mean," Harold said, his mind distinctly elsewhere.

Back in the hotel, Harold greeted the members of his troupe who had gathered in his room. He was quite pale and frightened. He sat the three dancers down and said, "We're getting out."

Conway said, "Are you all right? You look white."

"Pack. There's a train at five tonight. We have an hour and a half. My mother is very ill in Paris."

Benny Worth's eyebrows went up. "Your mother's in *Paris*?" Then he caught Harold's look, and the three dancers rose and without a word hurried out to their rooms to pack.

As Harold expected, Fugler was not giving up that easily. "The desk clerk must have called him," Harold said, "because we had hardly turned in our keys when there he was, looking around at our luggage with disaster in his face."

"What are you doing? You can't possibly be leaving," Fugler said. "What has happened? There is a definite possibility of a dinner with the Führer. This is not to be declined!"

Conway, who happened to be standing nearby, stepped over to Fugler. Fright had raised her voice half an octave. "Can't you see? He's terrified of his mother's passing away. She's not an old woman, so something terrible must have happened."

"I can call the Paris embassy. They will send someone. You must stay! This is impossible! What is her address? Please, you must give me her address, and I will see that doctors attend to her. This cannot happen, Mr. May! Herr Hitler has never before in his life expressed such . . ."

"I'm Jewish," Harold said.

"What did he say?" I asked, astonished.

Harold looked up, caught up in my excitement. I wondered then if this was the point of the story—to describe his escape not only from Germany but from his relation to Hitler, such was the pleasure spreading over his grinning boy's face, right up to the part in the middle of his hair.

"Fugler said, 'How do you do?' "

"How do you do!" I almost yelled, totally flummoxed.

"That's what he said. 'How do you

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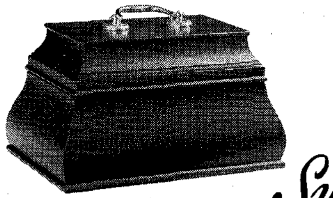

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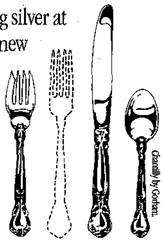

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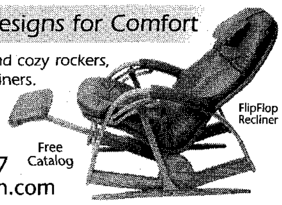

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do?' He took half a step back like a shot of compressed air had hit him in the chest, and said, 'How do you do?,' and stuck out his hand. His mouth fell open. He went white. I thought he was going to faint or shit. I felt a little sorry for him. . . . I even shook his hand. And I saw he was scared, like he'd seen a ghost."

"What did he mean, 'How do you do?'?" I demanded.

"I've never been sure," Harold said, seriously now. "I've thought about it a lot. He had an expression like I'd dropped down from the ceiling in front of him. And definitely scared. Definitely. I mean badly scared. Which I could understand, because he'd brought a Jew in in front of Hitler. Jews to them were like a disease, which is something I didn't really understand till later. But I think it could have been something else that had him frightened, too."

He paused for a moment, staring at his empty soda glass. Through the window I saw office workers starting to crowd the sidewalk; the day was ending. "Thinking back to when we met in Budapest and all, I wonder if maybe he'd gotten to, you know, feel pretty close to me. I don't mean sex, I mean like I'd been his ticket to that face-to-face with Hitler, which only important people ever got to have, and on top of that I know he had a top spot in the new school marked out for himself. I mean, I'd gotten hold of the power in a certain way, which I'd begun to notice when I was taken to the Professor to be certified and in the car Fugler began treating me as though I were higher up than him. And when the Professor came out and told him I was kosher, he was already turning into a different man, like he was under me. It was sort of pathetic.

"Mind you," Harold went on, "this was before we knew much about the camps and all," and then he stopped.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Nothing. Just that I . . ." He broke off. After a moment, he looked at me and said, "To tell the truth, he wasn't really such a bad guy, Fugler. Just crazy. Badly crazy. They all were. The whole country. Maybe all countries, frankly. In a way. When I look at Berlin bombed to shit now, everything on the ground, and I remember it when there wasn't a candy wrapper on the sidewalks, and you ask yourself, How is this possible? What did it to them? Something did it. What was it?"

He paused again. "I'm not excusing them in any way, but when he said, 'How do you do?' as though he'd never seen me before, I thought, These people are absolutely in a dream. And suddenly here's this Jew who he'd thought was a person. I guess you could say it was a dream that killed forty million people, but it was still a dream. To tell the truth, I think we all are—in a dream, I mean. I've kept thinking that ever since I left Germany. It's over ten years since I got home, and I'm still wondering about it. I mean, no people love nuts and bolts like Germans. Practical people down to their shoelaces. But they still dreamed themselves into this rubble."

He glanced out at the street. "You can't help wondering, when you walk around in the city. Are we any different? Maybe we're also caught in some dream." And, gesturing toward the crowd moving along the street, he said, "The things in their heads, the things they believe. Who knows how real it is? To me now we're like walking songs, walking novels, and the only time it gets to seem real is when somebody kills somebody." No one spoke for a moment; then I asked, "So you got out all right?"

"Oh, no problem. They were probably glad to see us go without bad publicity. We went back to Budapest and then we worked the wheel till the Germans marched into Prague, and after that we came home." He sat back in his chair, preparing to stand. It struck me how deceptively young and unmarked he had seemed a half hour earlier, when we first met, like a guy fresh out of the corn belt, while in fact failure had wrinkled the flesh around his eyes. He stuck out his hand, and I shook it. "Use it if you like," he said. "I want people to know. Maybe you'll figure it out—be my guest." Then he got up and went out into the street.

I never saw him again, but the story has visited me a hundred times over the past fifty years, and for some reason I keep pushing it under again. Maybe I would much rather think of positive, hopeful things. Which could also be a way of dreaming, of course. Still, I like to think that a lot of good things have come out of dreaming. ◆

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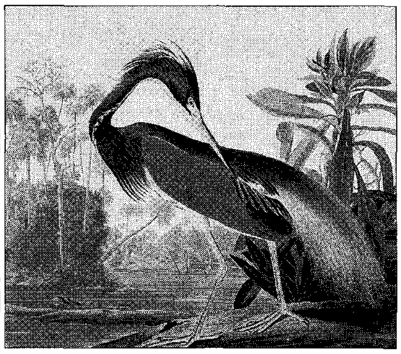

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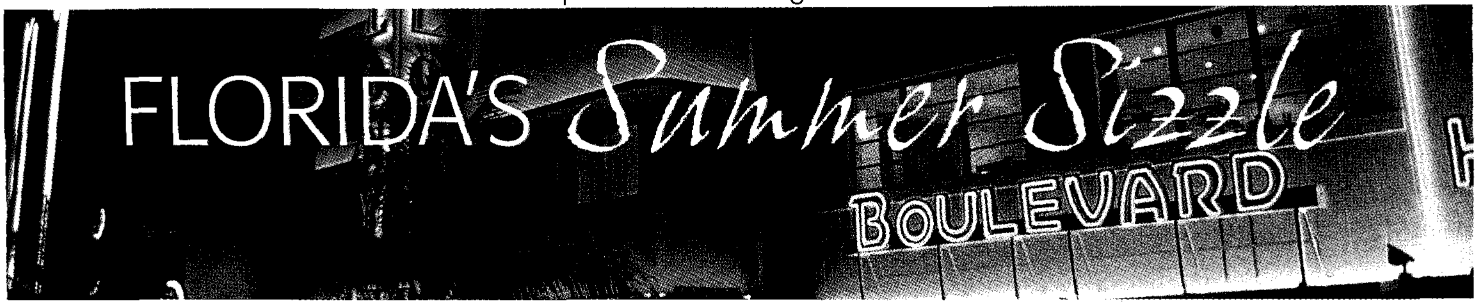

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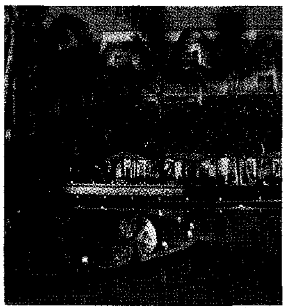

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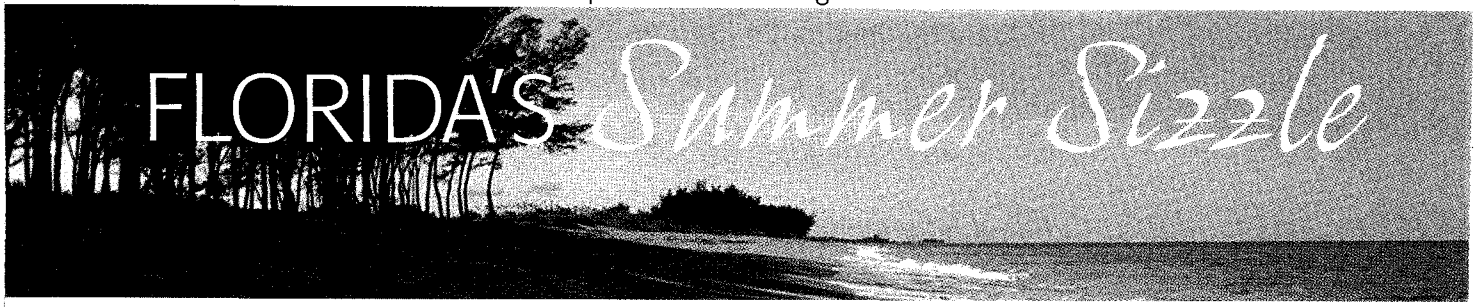

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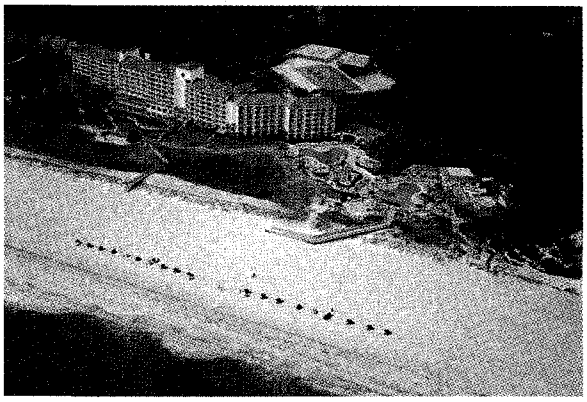

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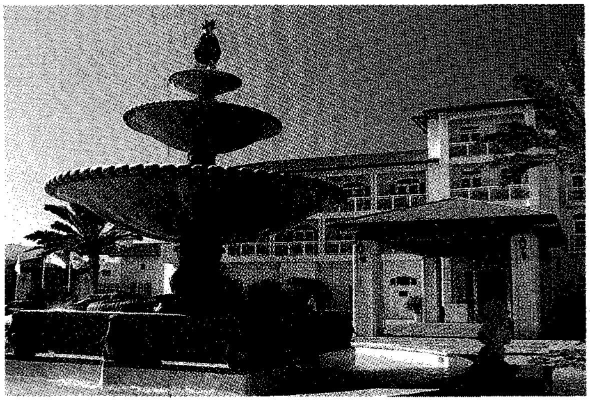

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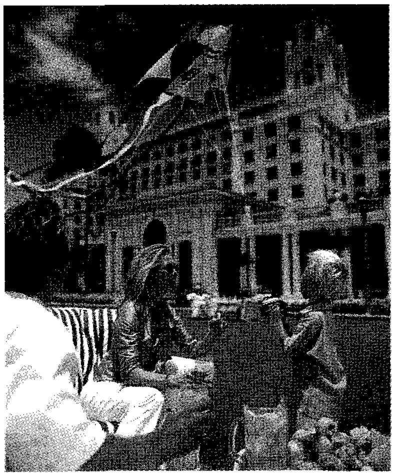

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

CAN THIS DIVORCE BE SAVED?

Marital mavens and their irreconcilable differences.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

It's late at night, and I'm reading E. Mavis Hetherington's "For Better or for Worse" (Norton; $26.95)—billed as "The Most Comprehensive Study of Divorce in America"—trying to figure out where and how I fit into the book's madly taxonomic universe. Lost in a sea of nomenclature, infinitely titrated statistics, and "points to remember," I feel my identity slowly slipping away from me. I'm a divorced woman who has not remarried and is the mother of a twelve-year-old daughter. What does that say about me? And, more important, what does my divorced state, this closely studied yet elusive condition, augur for my daughter?

Hetherington, a professor emerita of psychology at the University of Virginia, who has conducted interviews and gathered data for the past three decades, clearly knows her material. She launched her research project, called the Virginia Longitudinal Study, in 1972, as a way of exploring "postnuclear family pathways." And she set about answering a basic question: "Was there a unique developmental dynamic—perhaps even a uniquely harmful dynamic—in divorced families?"

To this end, she scrutinized nearly fourteen hundred families, including more than twenty-five hundred children, from every angle possible; her team of investigators used standard tools such as questionnaires and tests, but they also observed the families in their homes "as they solved problems, as they chatted over dinner, and in the hours between the child's arrival at home and bedtime." A designated "target child" in each family was assessed at the playground, in school, and in the eponymous Hetherington Laboratory. The parents in the study kept diaries, where they jotted down the intimate details of their daily lives at half-hour intervals three days a week. Finally, Hetherington worked all the data into a paint-by-numbers typology, which is where things get sticky.

For starters, I'm having trouble determining what kind of marriage—there are five models to choose from—I had before I got divorced: was it the Pursuer-Distancer Marriage? (It's "the most common type," Hetherington observes, and "also the most divorce-prone.") Or was it the Disengaged Marriage? Such marriages, which have a high failure rate, may drift along for years before finally ending, "with a whimper rather than a bang." I suppose the description of the Operatic Marriage comes closest, given a certain volatility of temperament that my ex-husband and I shared, but, unlike Hetherington's sample couple, we never smashed shiny new kitchen cabinets with a hammer, screaming, "I'll show you ugly!," and then went on to have explosive sex. ("For Operatics, quarreling is often a trigger for sex. Indeed, passionate love-making follows furious fighting . . . routinely.") I glimpse ingredients of my marriage everywhere, not excluding a dash of the Cohesive/Individuated Marriage (the cultural ideal for baby boomers, combining "gender equity" and old-fashioned intimacy) and two level teaspoons of the Traditional Marriage (breadwinner man and homemaker woman—which turns out, disconcertingly, to be the stablest arrangement of them all).

Even worse, I seem unable to locate myself on the continuum of "post-divorce adaptive styles." Once again, there are a number of floor models to choose from. I study Hetherington's six categories closely, hoping to place somewhere not too inglorious between the "divorce winners" (also referred to as "successful changers") and the abject losers. Front and center are the Enhancers; members of this group, mostly women, actually thrive after their marriages collapse, taking on a previously unsuspected aura of authority and competence—"a quiet gravitas." Then, there are the Good Enoughs, who are the most typical among the divorced; though "less resilient" than Enhancers, they stumble along as well as they can. Two other categories—the Seekers and the Libertines—are, as you might guess, predominantly male. Seekers are made uneasy by the single life; without a wife to "supply validation," they exhibit sexual problems and signs of depression. (Hetherington intrepidly tails her subjects right up to the bedroom keyhole, noting that, "after divorce, a number of men in the group became vulnerable to erectile dysfunction for the first time.") Seekers nudge everyone they know to fix them up, and tend to remarry relatively quickly. Libertines, on the other hand, act like college kids on spring break, turning to drink, drugs, and casual sex to allay their self-doubts, but within a year most of them, too, have begun to look for long-term relationships.

The remaining two styles—the Competent Loner and the Defeated—sound equally dispiriting, but Hetherington insists that the Competent Loner represents a "divorce winner" every bit as much as the Enhancer. Members of this group are generally not interested in remarrying; they have their jobs, friends, and hobbies to keep them warm. (I envision such people as having the admirable but slightly irritating resourcefulness that goes along with compulsively organized CD collections.) Although these self-sufficient folk make up only ten per cent of the study's sample population, their influence should not be underestimated; Hetherington points out that they may be "a harbinger of things

Divorce has become a leading cultural indicator, the locus of a whole cluster of anxieties about everything from sex to death.

JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

to come,” given the divorce rate, the general delay in marriage, and the steep rise in cohabitation (a living arrangement that portends badly for an enduring marriage).

Finally, down where no light shines, live the mole people known as the Defeated. This designation might seem self-evident, but Hetherington is determined to provide the grim details, perhaps by way of a cautionary example. She describes the history of a “mild-mannered” college professor named Walter, who left his wife to marry a scheming and seductive babysitter, and was, in turn, dumped for a SoHo artist: “Alone, he became deeply depressed, ignored his appearance, was unprepared for classes, saw less and less of his children, and spent most of his free time staring at the television set, smoking dope, or drinking.” And there he stayed: “At the twenty-year follow-up, Walter was still single, still depressed, and still Defeated.”

I’m no Walter, but clearly my post-divorce adaptive style leaves a lot to be desired. I am, if truth be told, looking for a narrative to call my own, something to help me explain why I am lingering on the stage set of life after the curtain has come down and the others have got married, or died. Marriage and death have always been the two paradigmatic endings in Western culture, which raises the question of how to make sense of the havoc represented by divorce, as either an end or a beginning. Perhaps divorce is a way of living two lives for the price of one. Surely this is what the social historian Lawrence Stone had in mind when he noted that the remarriage rate in the

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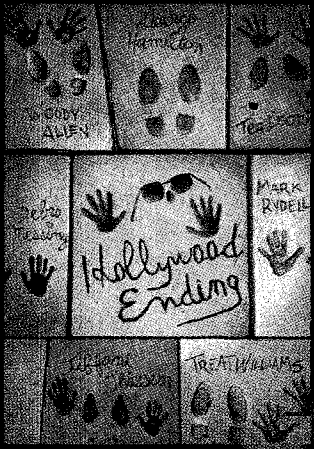

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seventeenth century was similar to that of today, with divorce replacing death as its precondition:

> Indeed, it looks very much as if modern divorce is little more than a functional substitute for death. The decline of the adult mortality rate after the late eighteenth century, by prolonging the expected duration of marriage to unprecedented lengths, eventually forced Western society to adopt the institutional escape-hatch of divorce.

The implications of his argument are not entirely consoling—was divorce my reward for not dying in childbirth? And although the historian does not address the small matter of what to do after one has escaped the institution, it seems almost a foregone conclusion that one will try to decode the experience by referring back to the original script; marriage impels one to remarriage, if only because there seems no other way to correct the narrative rupture that is divorce.

But it may already be too late for me to get back in the game. "Of all the divorce statistics I read," Wendy Swallow writes in "Breaking Apart: A Memoir of Divorce," "the one I hated the most stated that if a woman was going to remarry after being divorced, she would do so in the first four years. After that, the odds went way down." Although it may seem obvious that age is a big factor in the social life of women after divorce, given that it is an important factor *before* divorce, Hetherington has put in a lot of research time to reach the same conclusion. She pronounces on the issue as though she had just retrieved it from an overlooked file: "Women who were in their late thirties or older at the time of divorce had fewer dating opportunities than younger women or middle-aged men. At the twenty-year follow-up, they were much less likely to have remarried."

Now, in one of those clear-eyed moments that invariably hit after midnight, I see the future rising up before me, bringing loneliness and ruin, and marking me as a divorce loser. At this point, I'll take any postdivorce style that will have me: perhaps I could audition as a Competent Loner by polishing up my cooking skills, improving my "Hints from Heloise" laundry acumen, and keeping my desk neater. (Competent Loners, both male and female, are good homemakers.) Before falling asleep, I try to imagine myself as Mary McKay, an Enhancer who in six years went from being a "desperate humiliated woman" worried about paying her next bill to being a savvy entrepreneur with her own catering business. In your dreams, as they say.

The prevailing wisdom on divorce—and specifically the nature of its effect on children—has, like other cultural attitudes, changed along with the times. Do divorced-but-happier parents make for happier children, as was once thought, or is even a contentious but intact marriage better for children, as the more recent line of thinking has it? As the research has piled up over the past several decades, with recantations and modifications following each new finding, one senses that divorce has come to be a leading cultural indicator, the locus for a whole cluster of our anxieties about everything from sex to death.

Or it may be that I am hopelessly dating myself by the intensity with which I approach the subject: perhaps, for the generation coming up, it will be just another rite of passage to be navigated, like getting one's first job. I am referring to the marital micro-trend known as "starter marriages." Such blitzkrieg unions are, their enthusiasts tell us, all the rage; they last five years at most, are childless, and are usually over and done with before either partner reaches thirty. In a book called "The Starter Marriage and the Future of Matrimony" (Villard; $24.95), Pamela Paul predicts that these speeded-up scenarios are the wavelet of the immediate future. "People will slide wedding bands on and off," she reports, "with the same ease with which they whip out updated resumes." Paul bases her far-reaching conclusions on the slimmest of demographic bases (she interviewed sixty young divorced people around the country) and has compiled her book largely by stringing together quotes from a smorgasbord of books and articles (ranging from *Cosmopolitan* to Gertrude Himmelfarb's "One Nation, Two Cultures"). But there is no doubt that she is on to something marketable: herself a "starter marriage" survivor—in the glit-

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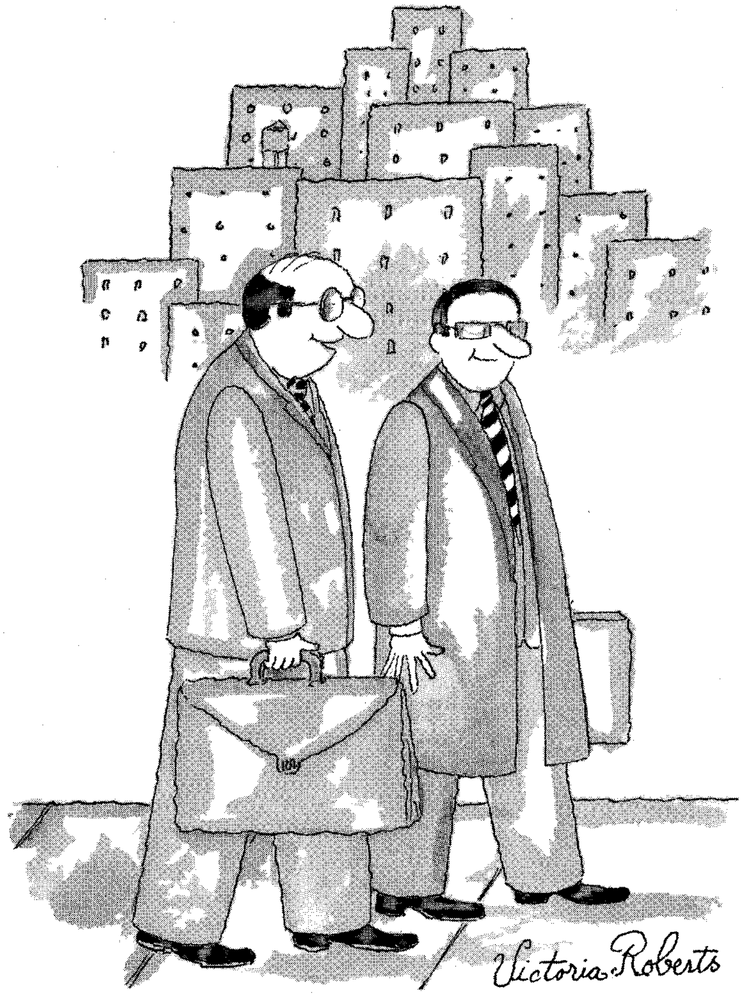
tering company of Drew Barrymore, Uma Thurman, and Angelina Jolie—Paul has already appeared on the "Today" show. She insists that this kind of marriage is entered into with expectations of permanence. All the same, a starter marriage sounds suspiciously like a starter apartment: a provisional arrangement, a necessary first step on the road to a more gratifying marital habitation—one with a top-of-the-line kitchen and a river view.

Divorce, then, isn't what it used to be: the exotic condition of the daring and the derelict. There were, for instance, no more than two or three divorced families in my class when I graduated from high school, in 1971; it was a rare enough occurrence to merit, if not quite a cover-up, then a hushed-voice treatment. As an adolescent, I was struck by the domestic setup portrayed in the movie "The Parent Trap," which featured a divorced couple who lived in different states and were the parents of identical-twin daughters (played by Hayley Mills), who meet for the first time at summer camp. When the movie came out, in 1961, it appeared risqué and modern even as it reaffirmed the shimmering ideal of the nuclear family. Of course, the movie was really about marriage, not divorce; its fantasy ending of a blissful reunion suggested that, with just a little more understanding and consideration, all marital squabbles could be resolved.

Soon, though, this cinematic image dissolved to a more fractious social landscape. The traditional view of marriage as a social contract based on a civic-minded ethic of duty to others began to loosen its hold. Whereas for Tennessee Williams's Big Daddy "truth is pain and sweat and paying bills and making love to a woman that you don't love anymore," a younger generation foraged for truth within its overscrutinized psyche. A new ethic stressed an individualistic duty to self, which was encouraged by



"I had all my good ideas too early and my mad ideas too late."

the growing influence of psychotherapeutic values. People were urged to look to marriage for inner satisfaction—and, naturally, they mostly failed to find it.

The real boost to what Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, in her book "The Divorce Culture," calls the "sad business of marital dissolution" arrived roughly with the Beatles, when it was discovered that all anyone needed was love, and that obligations—including those toward one's children—could go take care of themselves. Any economic and psychological harm to women and children was serenely overlooked, and, with the passage of the first no-fault divorce law, in 1969, in California (a state, fittingly, with a divorced governor), this song of the self grew louder. The imperative to keep a strained marriage afloat "for the sake of the children" became an imperative to end a strained marriage for the sake of the adults—and, it was blithely assumed, for the greater happiness of the children involved. This liberating, seventies view was reflected in books with titles such as "The Courage to Divorce" and "Creative Divorce: A New Opportunity for Personal Growth." In "The Future of Marriage," the sociologist Jessie Bernard went so far as to declare that a woman had to be "slightly ill mentally" in order to suffer the indignities of a traditional marriage.

In the eighties, a backlash started. We began to hear about the punctured self-esteem of the "maritally challenged" children of divorce. These worries, in turn, meshed with the more conservative climate of the Reagan years to create a revisionist perspective, what might be called the new stoicism, according to which a bad marriage was seen as ultimately less pernicious for children than divorce. Finally, there was the publication, in 1989, of the best-selling "Second Chances," by the clinical psychologist Judith Wallerstein. After studying sixty families in the Bay Area, she arrived at gloomy and guilt-inducing conclusions about the damage suffered by children of divorce. The book, which is anecdotal and impressionistic in character, offered the most effective challenge to the meliorist view of the previous decade. From these disparate trends, a new consensus was joined together.

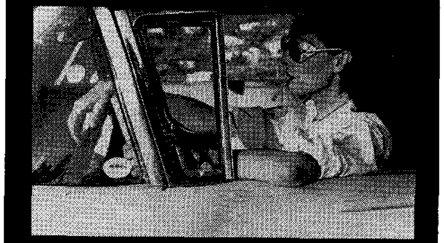
In time, it was put asunder as well. Wallerstein was widely faulted for her failure to use a control group: she interviewed mopey, disgruntled children from divorced homes but didn't compare them with children from intact families, many of whom are, of course, mopey and disgruntled, too. And then there was the question of self-selection. Parents who volunteered for the study may have been drawn by the offer of free clinical treatment. A disproportionate number—around fifty per cent—were seriously disturbed; in the first write-up of her research, "Surviving the Break-Up" (1980), Wallerstein described them as "chronically depressed, sometimes suicidal individuals, men and women with severe neurotic difficulties." Another fifteen to twenty per cent had even more extreme problems. As Andrew J. Cherlin, a sociologist at Johns Hopkins, has pointed out, "troubled parents often raise troubled children."

Given that Wallerstein based her findings on repeated personal interviews, one has to wonder, too, about the way preconceptions shape perceptions. Researchers have found, for instance, that schoolteachers who watch a videotape of an eight-year-old boy are more likely to conclude that he has adjustment problems when they are told his parents are divorced. We see, in short, what we expect to find. In Wallerstein's most recent opus, "The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study," co-written with Julia M. Lewis and Sandra Blakeslee, and published in 2000, she shifts her focus to the delayed impact of marital breakup: her somewhat troubled children have become even more troubled adults, who have difficulty entering into and sustaining marriages of their own. Though this time she made an effort to consult a comparison group, one isn't entirely surprised to learn that, say, the statistics about second-generation divorce rates don't fully support her doom-ridden pronouncements. The continuing popularity of her arguments among conservative commentators suggests that, in the *Kulturkampf* over divorce, children have, willy-nilly, become conscripts—ideological proxies in Pumas and Petit Bateau T-shirts.

It is plainly as an antidote to Wallerstein, who remains the most influential of the divorce theoreticians, that Hetherington advances a cheerier assessment: that the majority of the chil-

Paul Jasmin

Hollywood Cowboy



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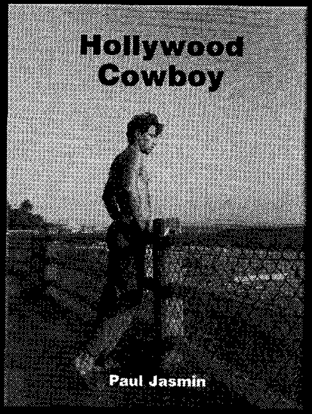

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dren of divorce—seventy-five to eighty per cent—do surprisingly well. "Most of the young men and women from my divorced families," she declares, "looked a lot like their contemporaries from non-divorced homes." As in all such wobbly but firmly stated arguments, little weight is given to the countervailing facts she has collected: that a significantly higher percentage of children from divorced families than from non-divorced ones—twenty-five per cent, as opposed to ten—had serious adaptive difficulties, and that it took six years for "the cloud of anxiety and depression that hung over children in the first year" to disperse.

From Hetherington's perspective, every bump is a boost. Indeed, she can sound curiously like a Chinese fortune cookie: "Don't focus on the past, focus on the future." As long as you have "competent-caring" children—Hetherington even offers a typology for the children of divorce—your marital breakup will leave them adept at conflict resolution and sensitive to the emotional needs of their peers. "Coping with the challenges of divorce and life in a single-parent family seems actually to enhance the ability of some children to deal with future stresses," she writes. These scenarios may be less slaphappy than those of the seventies liberationists, but one gets the feeling that for Hetherington, no less than for Wallerstein, empirical research has become something of an Easter-egg hunt, where you find only what you've already planted.

So it's hard to sustain the faith that social science will guide us toward any deep wisdom about marriage and divorce. Too often, it seems, the rhetoric of rigor conceals an impassioned agenda. And the acrimonious claims and counterclaims can reproduce the atmosphere of a divorce court, as petitioners battle for custody of the truth. Maybe that's why in the past several years the vicissitudes of marriage have been taken up more convincingly by memoirists and essayists, who eschew the realm of mutating statistics and tendentious conclusions for the open acceptance of bewilderment. The only certitude they offer is that one person will feel guilty about leaving and the other person will feel shame at being left. The precipitating cause is often, but not always, sexual faithlessness, and betrayed wives still seem more the norm than cuckolded husbands. Catherine Texier's "Breakup," an anguished chronicle of the final year in a tumultuous eighteen-year marriage—her husband leaves her for his book editor—is a case in point. The narrator flails about, trying to figure out when and why "our little world of the two of us" fell apart, setting down her feelings of rage and pain, her bemused sense that she has wandered into the wrong movie, the overworked genre of the woman scorned: "I sit down on the bed next to you and ask you the classic question (we are back in the bad screenplay, uttering tired clichés): are you having an affair?" She experiences her suffering as inevitably compromised by the fact that she's seen this picture before: "Some women lacerate the guy's best suits with a razor blade, cut up his boxers to shreds. I visualize pouring bleach all over your Agnès b. shirts. Streaking your Armani and Hugo Boss jackets with Day-Glo paint."

The narrator of John Taylor's memoir, "Falling," appears, by contrast, too stony, and his side of the story too convenient, by his own admission. All the same, his book offers a rare glimpse into the maelstrom of feelings that divorce elicits in the less emotionally articulate sex, as well as a demystifying look at the time-honored strategy of "compartmentalization" that men purportedly resort to in order to deal with conflict. "As complications branched out in my life, as my approach to my marriage became more dutiful and formal, I decided that the theory of the unified personality was a fiction," Taylor writes. "I subscribed instead to the Japanese theory of the masks of life: the mask of the father, the mask of the husband, the mask of the employee." The book is compelling precisely because Taylor makes no attempt to airbrush out the incriminating details, including the fact that his wife developed Parkinson's disease during the course of their eleven-year marriage. In one scene, set in the office of the therapist of a woman he is having an affair with, he rationalizes his behavior: "I didn't want to leave my wife and child, I said. I felt I had a duty to support them, particularly in light of my wife's condition. On the other hand, I didn't see the point of remaining faithful. In a loveless marriage it

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seemed an exercise in futility." But only a few pages later, while on a picturesque summer vacation with his wife and daughter, the narrator seems genuinely baffled at finding himself stuck in a deadened marriage, kept alive only by the "excuse" of shared parentship. The dilemma is no doubt an age-old one; what makes this a book of our time is the lack of shame in the recounting.

In Arnold Bennett's 1906 novel "Whom God Hath Joined," a woman who starts a legal action to divorce her adulterous husband finds him reaching for the moral upper hand:

> "You *must* think of the children" he insisted, with a pathetic air of wisdom and authority. . . . "It will cling to them all their lives." . . .
>
> "What will cling to them all their lives?"
>
> "The scandal of the action—if you let it go on."

His wife is undeterred. "People like you are apt to give too much importance to scandal," she tells him. "I've thought a good deal about the scandal, and it seems to me that it will only be like an illness. It will cure itself."

But has the cure—the social acceptability of divorce—given rise to an even graver illness? That's essentially James Q. Wilson's argument in "The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families" (HarperCollins; $25.95). As feminists and other misguided sophisticates have given the no-fault divorce cultural as well as legal currency, he maintains, they've only led their less privileged fellow-citizens into the mire. What seemed advanced and adventurous in Marin County yields misery and mayhem in South Central L.A. Wilson wants us to consider the civic consequences of our faddish allegiances. "Our society has managed to stigmatize stigma so much so that we are reluctant to blame people for any act that does not appear to inflict an immediate and palpable harm on someone else," he writes. "We wrongly suppose, I think, that shame is the enemy of personal emancipation when in fact an emancipated man or woman is one for whom inner control is sufficiently powerful to produce inner limits on actions that once were controlled by external forces." Except that shame *is* an external force; pretty much by definition, it's a social sanction, not a

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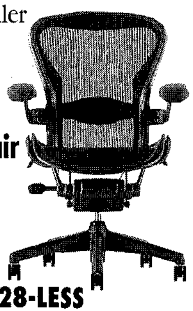

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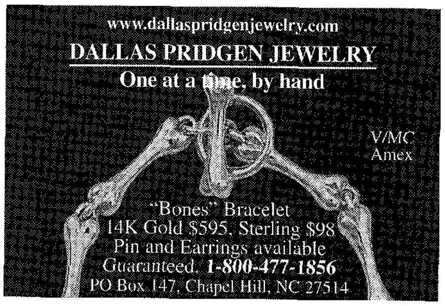

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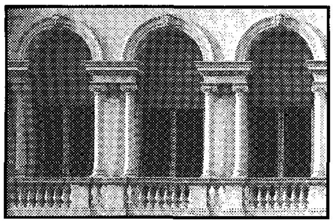

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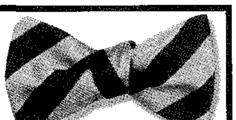

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psychological barrier. The sanctimonious philanderer of Bennett's novel was correct in identifying his wife's petition for a divorce, rather than his own affair with the governess, as the scandal.

Whatever Wilson's overreachings or Wallerstein's methodological weaknesses, though, the new stoics get one thing right. Divorce has very little to recommend it. Aside from the disorienting upheaval in a familiar if not necessarily blissful way of life, a divorce, especially if it involves children, often leaves bloodshed in its wake. The ferocious wranglings that catch the media's attention tend to have mega-millions at stake and frequently hinge on surreal demands for child support. But I would guess that few divorces manage to avoid a hostile atmosphere, marked by petty and vengeful impulses: the sums may be smaller but the bitterness is not.

In the end, I don't think there is any way of getting around the failure that divorce represents; and, however confused our sense of direction, our children want the old, linear plot line. Despite our wish to suspend narrow judgments of what constitutes a normal family, children are inherently conservative. They love the reassurance to be found in not breaking the mold, and they cling to an idyllic and intransigent image of family life. In this enchanted version, it is always a spring day sometime before the divorce revolution, in some suburb where the neighbors are friendly behind their white picket fences, and where kids sit down to dinner every night with two parents, one male and one female. Grownups, meanwhile, long ago consigned this picture to the dustbin of nostalgia for what probably never was. How sweet, we tell our children. How fake, we tell ourselves.

I imagine that my daughter is fairly typical in her eagerness to divest herself of all traces of credulous innocence. She exhibits a precocious—if somewhat abstract—sophistication about what she refers to as "issues" (having mostly to do with sex), gleaned from her ardent watching of "Dawson's Creek" and "Ally McBeal." She also likes to watch "Gilmore Girls," which follows the small-town adventures of a ditzy unwed mother and her sober, goal-oriented daughter. You would think that all this exposure to irregular domestic arrangements would have helped reconcile her to her own situation. And perhaps it has. But she is also a closet fan of "7th Heaven," in which a large, intact, and over-relating family have their misunderstandings but never forget that they love each other. For that matter, "The Parent Trap" has held up surprisingly well over the years.

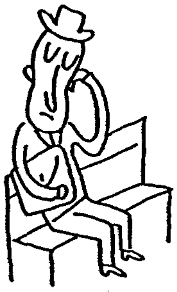
I don't delude myself that the traumatic effect of the divorce on my daughter will ever entirely vanish. Children have long memories, and my daughter seems to have an elephantine retention of the details leading up to the breakup of my marriage. She was not yet four when my ex-husband and I separated, yet she insists that she can vividly recall climbing up on the black chaise in the living room of our old apartment to kiss her father good night during the transitional period when he and I were sleeping under the same roof but not in the same bed. Although the passage of time has weakened her hopes of a magical ending, and for months at a time it seems as though she has accepted the reality of our parting, she can become wistful at a moment's notice.

What is hardest for her is being at family gatherings with my five siblings (none of whom are divorced, in defiance of the statistics) and her multitude of first cousins. A few months ago, on a Sunday night when we had come back from one such gathering, we lay on my bed talking. Somehow or other, she brought the conversation around to her father. He wasn't really the business type, she mused; perhaps he should have remained in California and pursued his artistic calling instead of moving to New York to try his hand at the stock market. I pointed out that if he hadn't moved to New York he and I would never have met and we wouldn't have had her, but she wasn't buying my logic. Instead came her *j'accuse:* Why, she wanted to know, had I married her father in the first place? It wasn't a demand so much as a plea for coherence. She listened patiently to my jumbled explanation, and I remember thinking that I sounded exactly like the mother on "Gilmore Girls." Before falling asleep, she clutched at her old fantasy as though it were a stuffed animal she had outgrown but still occasionally needed to hold. Did I think, she inquired just as her eyes were closing, there was any chance that her father and I would get married to each other again? ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Martha Inc., *by Christopher M. Byron (Wiley; $27.95).* Though gleefully heralded in the press as a hatchet job, this biography of Martha Stewart turns out to be surprisingly evenhanded. The author's mixture of distaste and respect for his subject is informed by his own contact with her: nodding acquaintances for years, they briefly were friends after Byron wrote an admiring article. But when his questions headed in uncomfortable directions Stewart's enthusiasm for the book turned to hostility. Byron, a business columnist for the *Post*, is most persuasive when he describes her professional maneuverings—particularly her genius for using any partnership to her advantage, from her marriage to her Kmart deal. Byron sifts the now familiar elements of Stewart's personal life—impoverished upbringing, bullying dad, cohorts of betrayed friends—and arrives at the plausible if predictable conclusion that character problems like ruthless egotism are at the root of her business success. Given that her net worth is $650 million, we should all have these problems.

The Dressing Station, *by Jonathan Kaplan (Grove; $25).* Kaplan could have had a lucrative practice as a doctor in England, but he tossed it away to become a battlefield surgeon in some of the world's most remote war zones, including Kurdistan, Mozambique, Burma, and Eritrea. In this refreshingly unsentimental memoir, he offers a vivid look at what it's like to practice medicine in places where there are always too many casualties and not enough resources. His descriptions of surgery are unflinching, and, while the narrative drags when he's away from the front line, he's never away for long. As a result, Kaplan gives us a remarkable self-portrait of the war junkie. He seems most alive when he's reinflating a collapsed lung using only a rubber glove or performing a skin graft with a safety razor, and though he lets us see close up the devastation of modern warfare, he is also painfully honest about the allure that war holds for him. "Part of the experience of being in the line of fire," he writes, "is the incomparable rush of clarity that accompanies it, a liberation from life's ordinary, insidious dread."



Emporium, *by Adam Johnson (Viking; $24.95).* A teen-age sniper befriends a bomb-sniffing robot; a masturbating French-Canadian is sent to the moon in a battery-powered space nodule; a boy drives a tour bus for the Cancer Survivors' Club; and a couple struggle to keep their bulletproof-vest store afloat. The landscape of this remarkable début collection of stories is built on hard-edged nouns like Kevlar, Futron, plutonium, and dyno-burner, but its real subject is the loneliness of youth, the failure of parents, and the yearning for connection. Johnson's heroes are isolated and alienated, but are capable of feeling just the right emotion at just the right time. "Coupled and bound with someone I cannot see, hear, or feel," one says, "I have . . . a vision: I see a resort permanently frozen in glass, like a 'Wish you were here' diorama in a snow globe, with plastic figurines of those who people my life, while around them whips a constant category-three storm."

Death and Nightingales, *by Eugene McCabe (Bloomsbury; $23.95).* This taut novel recounts a day in the life of twenty-five-year-old Elizabeth Winters. The year is 1883, and the name Parnell is on everyone's lips; Beth's mother, a Catholic, is dead, and the truce between the girl and her stepfather, a Protestant landowner, is uneasy. At first, all this seems familiar, if uncommonly well told—an intimate rendering of the smell of meadowsweet and boiled bacon. But after the day encompasses both a botched theft and a drowning—events that illuminate not only Beth's fate but also a nation's saga of violent betrayal—it becomes clear that McCabe has written a heartbreaking modern fable.

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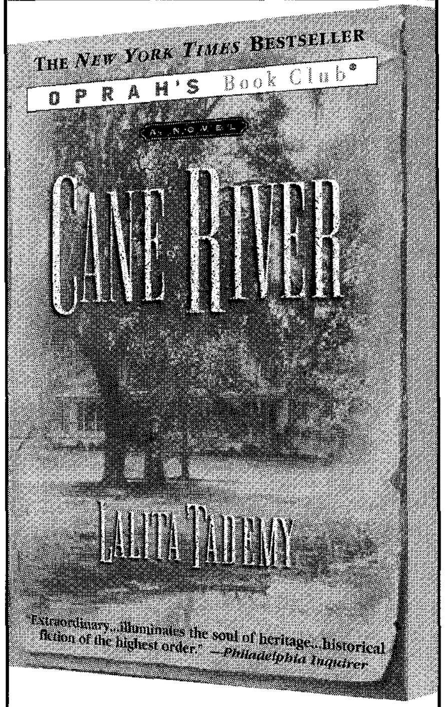
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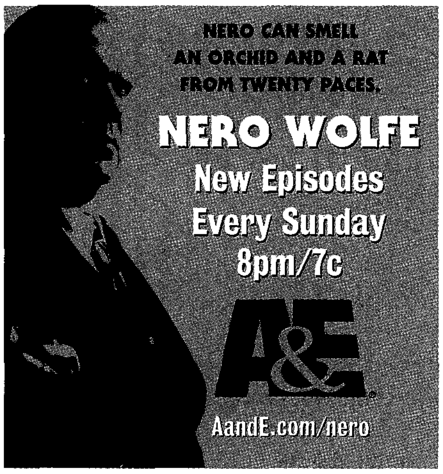

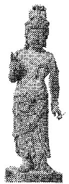

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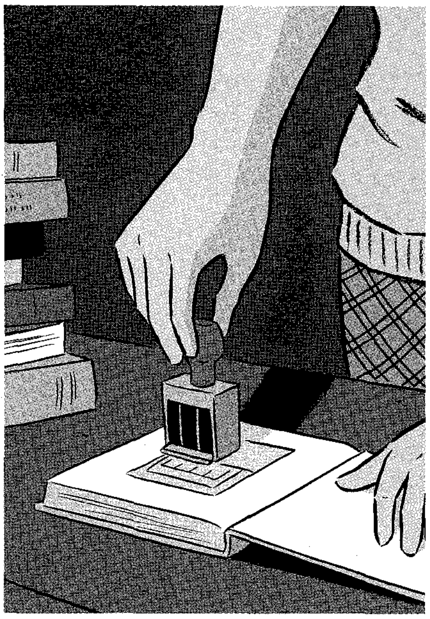
BOUND

A "lowest ebb" implies something singular and finite, but for many of us, born in the Depression and raised by parents distrustful of fortune, an "ebb" might easily have lasted for years. When I was growing up, my parents, my younger brother, and I lived with my mother's Hungarian parents on a small farm in upstate New York, which failed by slow, excruciating degrees in the nineteen-forties and fifties.



ADRIAN TOMINE

Always the fear prevailed that we would lose the farm. I think my city-born father must have hated it, hated the ceaseless labor of it, and yet nothing was more terrible to contemplate than losing property; it was all that stood between you and oblivion. To possess something was to be vulnerable to losing it. Possession was audacity in the face of imminent loss.

Yet the most desperate period of my life, financially speaking, was my years as an undergraduate at Syracuse University, which I was able to attend on a New York State Regents scholarship. Beyond the tuition, there was pressure to come up with money for room and board and other expenses. Above all, I lived in constant fear of doing poorly academically, and being shipped back to Millersport, where my farm tasks awaited.

At Syracuse, I was privileged to work in the university library for a dollar an hour, for as many hours a week as I could manage. This was my first "real" job; I could now consider myself an adult. Yet, in my immaturity, in my naïveté and idiocy, I'd pledged a sorority, and for this impulsive act I would pay, financially and emotionally, for a long time. I had not realized how many hidden costs would show up each month on my bill. This was a nightmare; there always seemed to be special assessments, dues I hadn't anticipated. And fines. Because I worked at the library, I had to miss numerous meetings and sorority functions, and for each event missed a fine was levied. When I missed "ritual" functions, the fines were higher. Now a fever came upon me to resign from the sorority, which I couldn't afford and felt no kinship with. I could not believe I had made such a mistake. But joining a sorority is akin to those cruelly ingenious fish traps in which an unwary fish, having swum inside, can't maneuver to turn and escape. Now a percentage of my work hours had to go toward defraying sorority costs.

I had always loved libraries, but working in the stacks of a library with a large multifloored collection was a daunting prospect. My memory of those months is of a labyrinth so dimly lit (stacks not "in use" were dark; you had to switch them on when you entered) as to inspire hallucination—a universe, or a graveyard of books. Not very encouraging to a nineteen-year-old whose hope was to be a writer someday. It was one of the profound shocks of my life, when I received my first paycheck, to discover that so much of my salary went to income taxes: I wasn't working for a dollar an hour but for something like seventy cents. A librarian kindly pointed out, "It's the same for all of us."

I would work at the library until it closed, at 11 P.M., then I would return to the sorority house where I now boarded, find a place that was quiet amid the general noise and hilarity of my sisters, and study until 1 or 2 A.M. To be poor is not only spiritually demeaning but impractical: you find yourself doing things you would not wish to do, out of an inability to do that which you might wish to do. To be poor in the midst of affluence is to feel oneself both an outsider and, oddly, privileged: as a scholarship girl, I was a spy in the house of mirth. If only I hadn't joined the house of mirth quite so bindingly, affixing my signature to a legal contract! I had pleaded with sorority officers, officers of the alumni organization, and the dean of women at the university to be allowed to "de-activate" from the sorority; but my pleas were rebuffed.

I was never released from my "sacred sisterhood" except by graduating and moving away. My prevailing anxiety about failing my academic studies must have inspired overcompensation, for I was the valedictorian of my class. Forty years later, going through my recently deceased father's papers, I would discover the amount of the New York State Regents scholarship that had so changed my life: it was five hundred dollars a year. ♦

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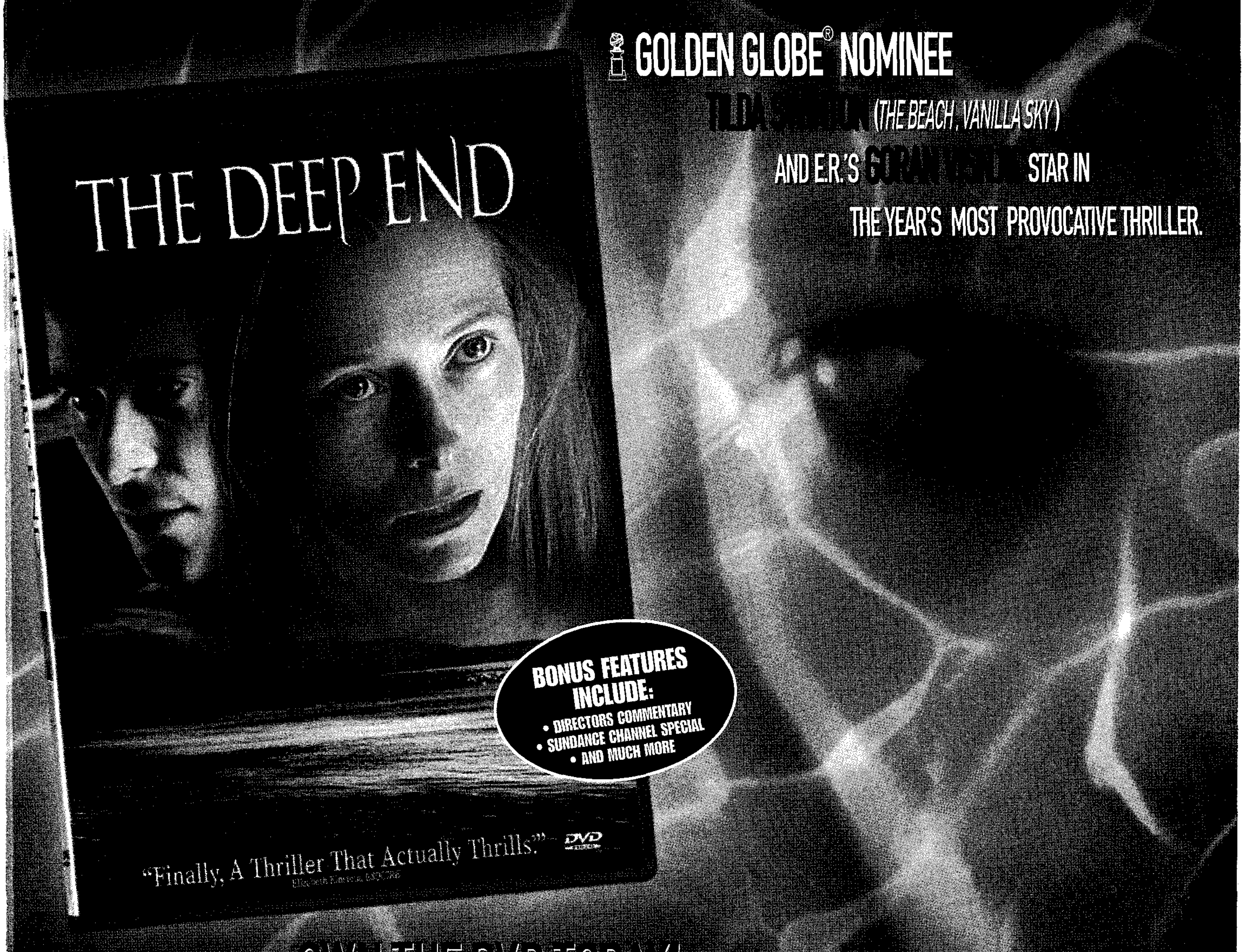

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POP MUSIC

ROCK SOLID

The White Stripes, the Strokes, and the Hives.

BY BEN GREENMAN

Will pop—Britney, J. Lo, 'N Sync, and the rest—kill rock? Whenever rock music has been threatened in the past (by disco, by New Kids on the Block), it has rebounded (with punk, with grunge). Sometimes it has wobbled, sometimes it has teetered, but it has never completely fallen down. As Neil Young put it, "Hey, hey, my, my, rock and roll will never die."

But upon closer inspection Young's Theorem breaks down. True, the best-selling act of 2001 was the alternative-metal outfit Linkin Park, and similar groups like Creed, P.O.D., and Puddle of Mudd have also sold in the millions. But these bands aren't exactly playing rock and roll. Though the dictionary might not make the distinction, rock and roll is a subset of rock distinguished by an extra ingredient: an upjut of energy, a defiant attitude, a backbeat. Jerry Lee Lewis was rock and roll. Gene Pitney wasn't. The Pretenders were rock and roll. The Bee Gees weren't. Elvis Costello was rock and roll for a while, and then he wasn't. By this standard, the moody crooning of Creed and friends doesn't qualify; nor does the self-effacing arena rock of the Dave Matthews Band. But there does seem to be a new crop of bands that favor short, spiky songs galvanized by angst and anger. If these bands—the White Stripes and the Strokes are the best known, and among the best—aren't exactly new, they're a return to something older and more distinctive: to the spirit of punk and, before that, of the British Invasion.

The White Stripes, the pride of Detroit, consist of Jack White and Meg White. He's the principal songwriter, she drums; it's an arrangement that brings to mind the Carpenters, but this is a different kind of timbre altogether. On their first two albums, the White Stripes placed Jack's originals alongside covers of compositions by Son House ("Death Letter"), Robert Johnson ("Stop Breakin' Down"), and Bob Dylan ("One More Cup of Coffee"). The song selection suggests a band with its roots in country blues, and, to some degree, that's the case, although the White Stripes play the blues the way bands like the Kinks and the Who played rhythm and blues: loud and fast and out of control, with yowling dragged-cat vocals and the ever-present possibility of total derailment. After the release of their third, and strongest, album, "White Blood Cells," the pair went about conquering the worldwide press, not just with their music but with a canny media prank in which Jack and Meg, who used to be married to each other, pretended to be brother and sister. Though the White Stripes are an aggressively eclectic band, both musically and lyrically ("The Union Forever," one of the highlights of "White Blood Cells," is cobbled together entirely from dialogue drawn from "Citizen Kane"), the strongest case for their importance rests on their simplest songs. "Fell in Love with a Girl," the first single from "White Blood Cells," is a mad rush of a love song with nah-nah-nah backup vocals that sound as though they were piped in directly from the nineteen-sixties. In less than two minutes—it's that short—it distills thirty-five years of garage rock and leaves you wanting more.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the Strokes, a privileged New York fivesome; the lead singer is Julian Casablancas, the scion of the Casablancas modelling empire, and the seed of the band was planted at Manhattan's Dwight School. If the White Stripes are sixties idealists, right down to their Dylan fixation and their adoration for grizzled old bluesmen, the Strokes are seventies cynics, with a

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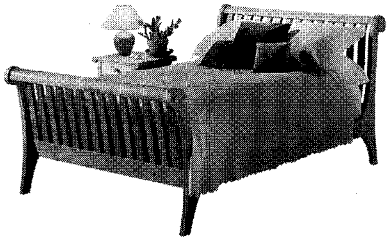

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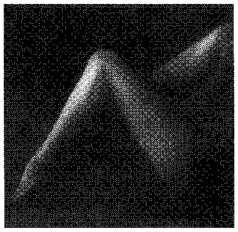

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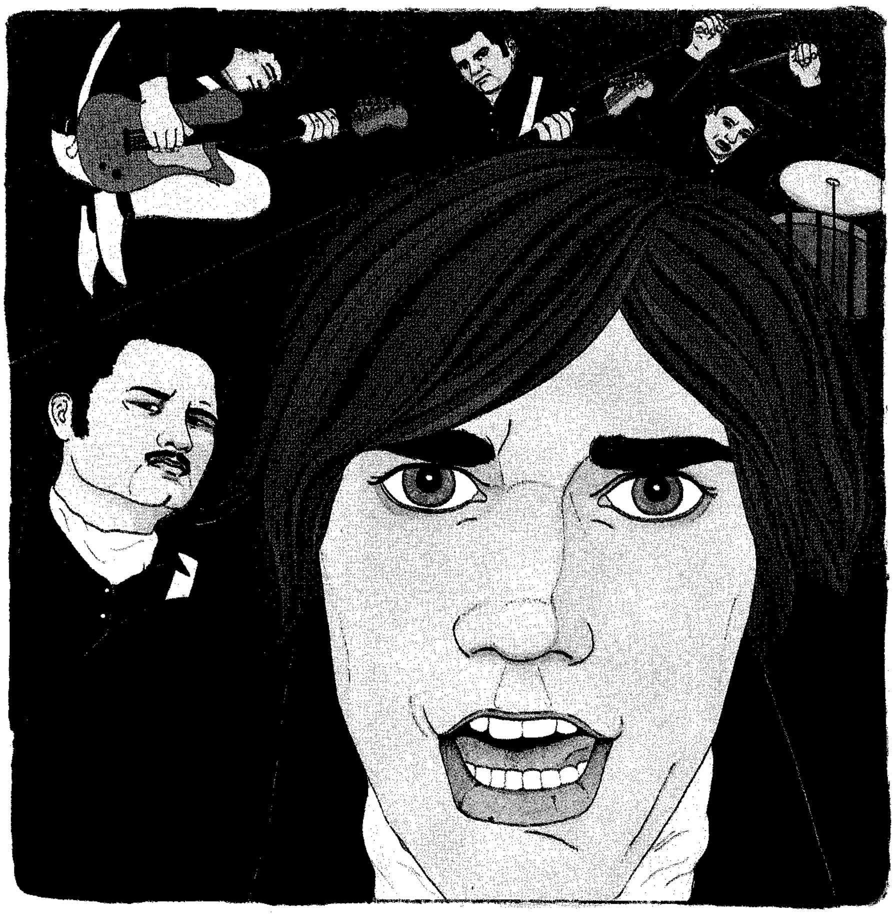
sound that begins in the debauched, jaded fin-de-hippie rock of the Velvet Underground. Despite receiving an immense amount of attention in the British music press, the band has managed to retain its air of downtown cool—to suggest, in short, that it can't be bothered with stardom. The result is a certain smug humorlessness, but the Strokes, to their credit, generally make good on their affectation: "Last Nite," the lead single from their début album, "Is This It," is a muzzy ode to urban night life filled with such a mixture of longing and bravado that it almost makes you forget that the band has simply retrofit new lyrics onto the central riff of Tom Petty's "American Girl." As befits media darlings, the Strokes have been involved in a minor controversy: in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks, a song titled "New York City Cops" was pulled from the album as a result of a chorus ("New York City cops / They ain't too smart") that suddenly lost its insolence.

Both the White Stripes and the Strokes have become big stars in England, and they are starting to break Stateside. But are they capable of having a more widespread effect, or will they meet the admirable but more subdued fate of dozens of bands, from the Afghan Whigs to Pavement and Sleater-Kinney, who managed to become critical favorites without doing much to change the face of popular music? A movement needs geographic proximity. It needs rivalries. It needs Mick Jagger and John Lennon and Ray Davies, and even Phil May, eying one another with suspicious admiration from across the smoky rooms of London night clubs. A Renaissance, in short, needs Florence. And, while there are plenty of bands that are producing the same kind of music as the Stripes and the Strokes—Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, in San Francisco; the Mooney Suzuki, in New York—they seem to be the result of coincidence rather than of the rich mix of coöperation or competition required for real change. When Jack White was asked by a British journalist about the



Will Howlin' Pelle Almqvist and the Hives lead a Swedish Invasion?

LARA TOMLIN

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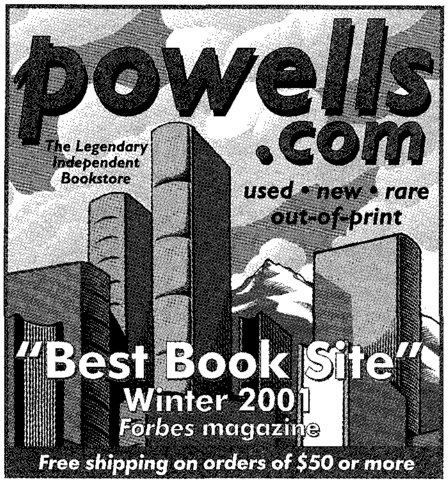
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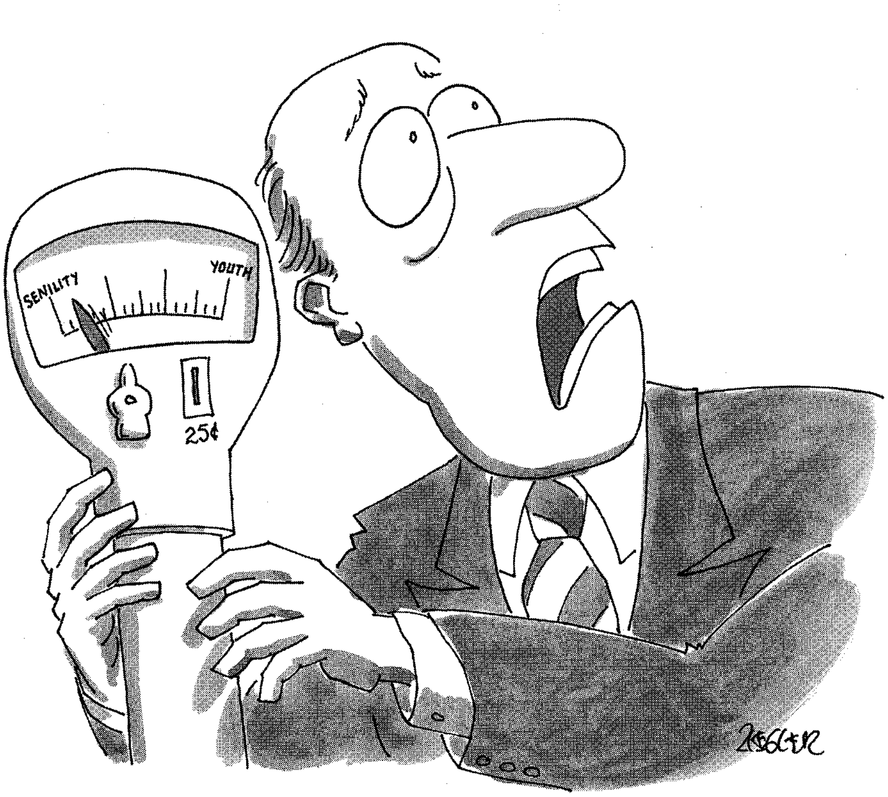


"More quarters! For God's sake, more quarters!"

• •

Strokes, he simply shrugged. "At least it's rock and roll," he said. It is, but I wish it were more.

More is what you get from a band named the Hives, who aren't from Detroit or from downtown but, rather, from Fagersta, a small Swedish industrial city about a hundred miles northwest of Stockholm. After getting together, in the mid-nineties, the Hives quickly became huge in Sweden, which is sort of like being the strongest person in your house. The band members had stupid-smart names (Vigilante Carlstroem and Nicholaus Arson on guitars, Dr. Matt Destruction on bass, Chris Dangerous on drums, and Howlin' Pelle Almqvist on vocals) and stupid-smart song titles ("a.k.a. I-D-I-O-T," "King of Asskissing," "Hail Hail Spit 'n' Drool"); and on their first record, "Barely Legal," they came off as fairly straightforward punks who distinguished themselves with a sneaky sense of humor. (One recent B side was an instrumental called "The Hives Are Law, You Are Crime.") The title of the band's second album, "Veni Vidi Vicious," suggests more of the same, but the record, officially released in late 2000 and just now gathering momentum, is something completely different. Short and sharp, with twelve songs in twenty-eight minutes, it's the most exuberant and powerful rock and roll in recent memory.

The first song is titled "The Hives Declare Guerre Nucleaire," and that pretty much explains it. With blast-force playing and a monstrous hook reminiscent of the early Kinks, the song brashly looks forward to 2004 ("Had an atomic bore"), 2006 ("Did some atomic tricks"), and beyond. After this declaration of war, the Hives show off their arsenal: tight rhythm guitar, sing-along choruses, and Almqvist earning his name with a rush of wails and yelps. The Hives are in arrears to the Ramones and the Stooges, of course (the second song, "Die, All Right!," quotes liberally from "Raw Power"), as well as to countless garage bands and the Hamburg-era Beatles, but they play as if they had created something entirely new. It's a toss-up which is more surprising: the fact that a contemporary album gets through its first six songs without any discernible drop in energy or the fact that Sweden, previously known for giving us ABBA, Ikea, and other four-letter words, is suddenly churning out intoxicating punk rock.

It's been said that the Ramones' songs weren't particularly short—they were long songs played very quickly. You could say the same thing about the Hives. "Main Offender," the strongest song on "Veni Vidi Vicious," and the one most likely to change the world overnight, opens with a simple chord that erupts into a much larger version of itself; Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" used this same trick, but took twice as long to get there. "Main Offender" goes like a sports car through a racecourse full of twisty chicanes, sudden stops, and stretches where you can open up the throttle. At the close of each chorus, Almqvist asks, "Why me?," in a voice so raw-throated, so purely desperate and genuinely insolent at the same time, that it makes Jack White and Julian Casablancas sound like mannerists.

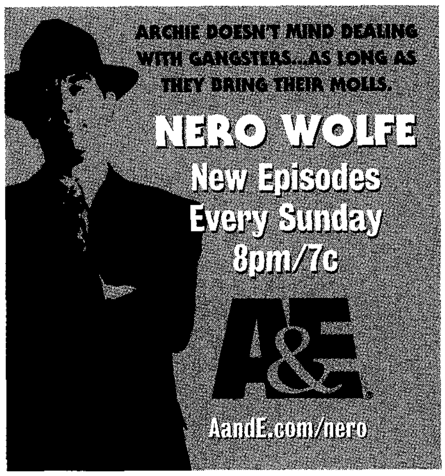
The Hives dress identically: in black suits and white shoes, a natty sartorial scheme well represented on the band's three videos (which have been included on the "Veni Vidi Vicious" CD in MPEG format). "Main Offender" is the standout visually as well as aurally. Filmed in high-contrast black-and-white, with a puckish story line in which the Hives track down and vanquish a rival band named the Negatives (who may or may not have been invented by the fictional Hives as a publicity stunt), the video has the manic energy of a Buster Keaton short—or, for that matter, of "A Hard Day's Night."

In another video, for the propulsive "Hate to Say I Told You So," the band is filmed against a stark, cream-colored background; the musicians and their instruments are the only things in the frame, and they command it utterly. At one point in the song, the guitars and drums drop out, leaving just bass and vocals; the Hives visually echo the stripped-down arrangement by freezing most of the band—the drummer in mid-hit, one of the guitarists in midair. When the full band rejoins the song, the stick drops to the drum, and the guitarist to the ground. Almqvist shows off the full complement of rock-singer moves, posing and preening his way through what is, by any standard, a star-making performance. The lead-singer theatrics—he is alternately out of control like Iggy and in control like Jagger—are hardly new. They are part of a tradition that began with the British blues bands, where skinny white kids did their best to approximate the frenetic showmanship of R. & B. vets like James Brown. But, for the most part, it's futile to imagine anything that is both entirely new and any good at all. What works, as the Hives prove repeatedly, is loud guitars marshalled in the service of indelible melodies, and a distinctive but not technically polished voice caterwauling.

Along with the songs, the suits, and the videos, the Hives also have a great back story. In the British press, they have claimed that they are the punk equivalent of a boy band, assembled and trained as teen-agers by a mysterious impresario named Randy Fitzsimmons; to date, all their songs have been credited to him. A Swede named Randy Fitzsimmons? Unlikely. Could this be the Hives' take on the current teen-pop climate, their tongue-in-cheek attempt to both cash in on and subvert the vogue for prefabricated stars?

Most albums, even good ones, start to flag toward the end. "Veni Vidi Vicious" never takes a breath, roaring through "The Hives Introduce the Metric System in Time" and "Inspection Wise 1999" before concluding with the preposterously catchy "Supply and Demand." The only false moment is a herky-jerky cover of the Impressions' "Find Another Girl," which suggests that the band may not be able to branch out into post-punk covers of classic soul ballads. But who cares? While one great album may not a career make, it can certainly tinder a revolution: after the Sex Pistols urinated on the platform shoes of mid-seventies pop music, it didn't matter that they never released another record.

It's been many years since I dreamed about a rock band. Last week, I dreamed of the Hives. In my dream, Sweden was separated from New York by a thin strip of water. The band boarded a ship on the Swedish side, and as it came across the strait a crowd thronged the American shore, screaming spontaneously and unself-consciously, lost in a new apian Beatlemania. The Hives are touring the United States starting late next month. Get stung. ♦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THE CURRENT CINEMA

SECRET LIVES

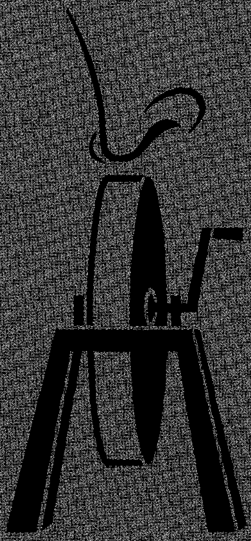
"Enigma" and "World Traveler."

BY ANTHONY LANE

There is one compelling reason to catch "Enigma," the new Michael Apted film. The reason, it must be said, lasts less than a second; nevertheless, how else are you going to see Mick Jagger dressed as a pilot in the Royal Air Force? The scene is a lighthearted night in blacked-out England, during the Second World War. The camera is poking its nose into a crowd of revellers, and there, suddenly, is a blink of Old Rubber Lips. The thought that "Enigma" might feature a rolling sequence of cameos by the Stones forced me to the brink of my seat. Any chance of Squadron Leader Ronnie Wood playing Air Force guitar? Or Vice-Admiral Sir Keith Richards stuck up in the crow's nest, where he so inarguably belongs? Tragically, it was not to be, and I had to resign myself to the fact that Mick had commandeered a role purely in his capacity as one of the film's producers. He is the right man for the job, since he has long been fascinated by the saga of Enigma—which, in case you were wondering, is a machine.

The Enigma was used by the Germans for the encryption of naval and military messages. In essence, the legend runs as follows: Enigma codes were designed to be unbreakable, and the British broke them. The decoding was done at Bletchley Park, a monstrous country house halfway between Oxford and Cambridge. Its purposes demanded the clearest and, in every sense, the most curious brains in the country, with eccentricities to match; at the end of a visit to Bletchley, Churchill is rumored to have said that when he urged the recruiting team to leave no stone unturned he didn't realize that they would take it literally. Still, it was later estimated that the efforts of the Bletchley code-breakers had shortened the war by two years, in which case the clutch of eggheads—mathematicians, chess players, crossword-compilers, many of whom were unfit for active service, presumably because no helmets could be found to protect their giant craniums—did more to alleviate human misery than any other outfit in the Allied cause. The irony is that for decades none of them received recognition; Bletchley remained so secret that, officially, it never existed. Only in the nineteen-seventies did the veil lift, and since then the intricacies of that period have become, to historians and others, a proud obsession.

Hence "Enigma," the 1995 novel by Robert Harris, who somehow turned a tale of cloistered minds into a best-selling thriller; and hence Apted's film, which has to perform that same delicate trick in the more exposing arena of a movie. That it doesn't work is a shame, but no surprise, because what seemed, on the page, like a question of tonal balance resolves itself into an impossible pitch: "Enigma" is, to be blunt, "No Way Out" meets "Revenge of the Nerds," and the meeting is not a happy one. The script is by Tom Stoppard, who, of all people, should have thrilled to the seductions of a language game, yet even he is confounded by the indigestible. We get Tom Jericho (Dougray Scott), a young Cambridge mathematician, who, after a nervous collapse, is summoned back to Bletchley to aid the fight against Shark, a German code with added teeth. Much of the pleasure of the cryptanalyst's world lies in the naming of techniques: strip, drop, break, pinch, crib, whisper, kiss—these are the tools of the trade, fondly culled from the slang of the lover, the burglar, and the sneak. Shark is employed by German U-boats in the North Atlantic as they hunt for British and American merchant ships, stocked with men and



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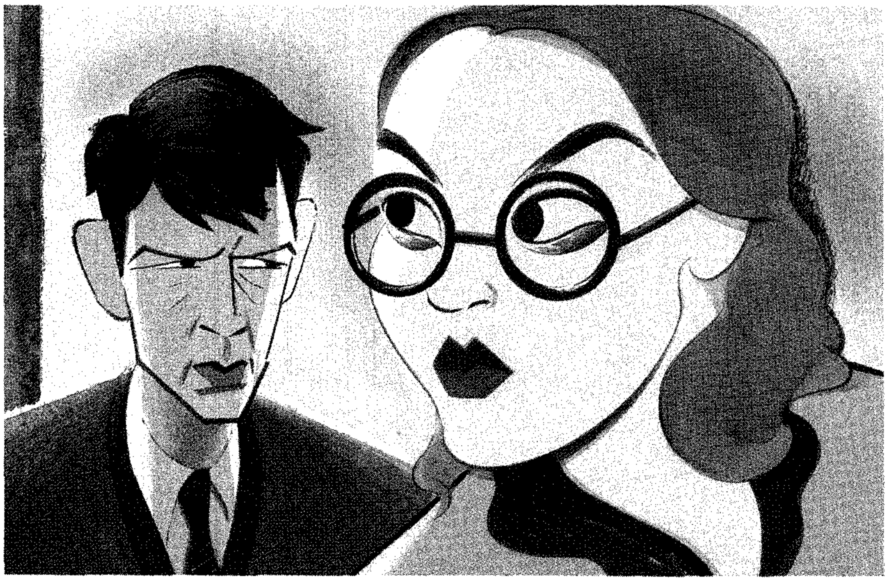
supplies. Unless Jericho and his friends can solve the Shark conundrum, the submarines, untracked by Allied boats, will be free to close and kill.

Also present—and, at times, ominously absent—are Claire Romilly (Saffron Burrows), a Bletchley clerk with whom Jericho conducts an affair; Hester Wallace (Kate Winslet), another clerk, but plumper and bespectacled, and therefore less open to suspicion; a clan of Jericho's supernumerate colleagues, one of whom, Logie (Tom Hollander), smokes a pipe even though he appears to be coming up to his ninth birthday; and, lastly and smoothly, a vision in gray flannel from the intelligence services, who goes by the name of Wigram (Jeremy Northam). He is perturbed by the thought of information seeping out of Bletchley; more important, he is the only source of anti-earnest behavior in the whole picture. Northam breezes through the byways of the story, effortlessly cracking its code of pensive repression, and fully aware that when the fate of the free world is at stake your only option is to shrug it off with a smile. Everything around him is a mass of corrugated foreheads, panicky eyes, and haggard, sleepless dawns; the endeavors of Bletchley may have been of incalculable weight, but do the performers have to look quite so laden down? Winslet, who radiates an air of determined jollity, should be well tuned to the nineteen-forties, yet the film somehow gets in her way, refusing to view her as more than a propellant of the plot; as for Dougray Scott, last seen having a motorcycle fight at the end of "Mission: Impossible 2," I am starting to wonder if Tom Cruise ran over his big toe or something, because the pain is still writ large upon his brow.


Dougray Scott and Kate Winslet in Michael Apted's story of British code-breakers.

ERIC PALMA

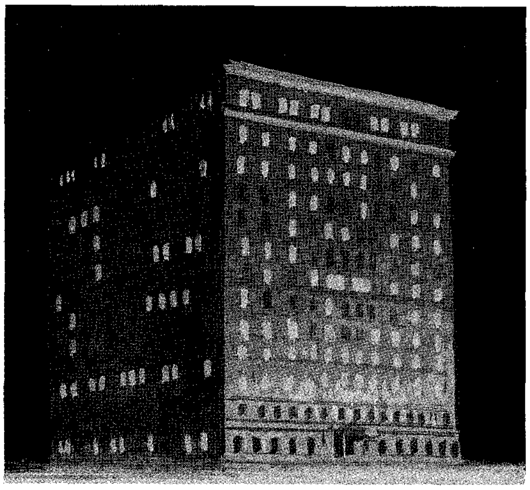
Things heat up in the final reel, but the redemption comes too late; nor, to be honest, am I entirely clear why it has to take place on a remote jetty in Scotland. If we must have action movies starring a man in a tweed jacket, that man has to be Robert Donat, and we need the juicy, amusable tones of Alfred Hitchcock telling him what to do; but action cannot bloom out of inaction just for the sake of it, and Apted cannot escape, whether via jetty or alternative means, the stubborn fact that the joys of Harris's book were doggedly undramatic. They were the joys of period deprivation, of frosted nights in Cambridge rooms, of whale meat and powdered eggs—the comically awful ingredients of a serious sacrifice, from which Britain, forever knotted in the tangle of duty and discomfort, has never quite recovered. They also serve who only sit and think: such was the uncryptic lesson of Bletchley, and it holds good for peace as well as war—for almost any conditions, indeed, apart from those which prevail in cinema. Tarkovsky might have got a movie out of it, but not Mick Jagger.

The new film from Bart Freundlich, who made "The Myth of Fingerprints," is called "World Traveler," although the voyager in question, Cal (Billy Crudup), fails to rack up a single frequent-flier mile in the course of the movie. In fact, he never even leaves his native land. Cal's itinerary passes from sea to shining sea, starting in New York and winding up in Oregon; it is the tale of a roving eye, poised between a journey of self-discovery and a rake's progress, although a less tasteful and reflective film, one with a more vulgar spirit of inquiry, might have stumbled upon the radical possibility that the two can be the same.

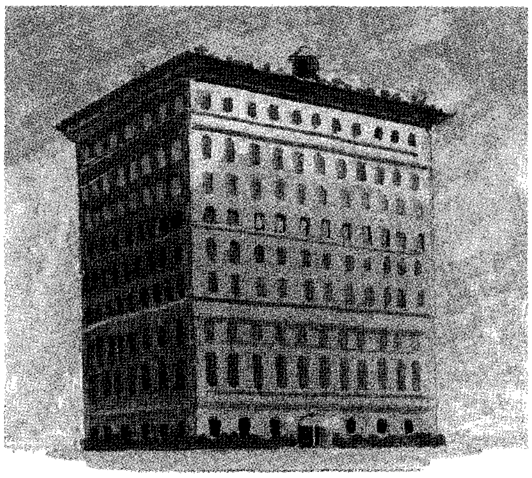
Cal has a wife and young son in New York, whom he leaves without warning or farewell. (Their anguish at losing him, which must be harsh and specific compared with his nebulous unease, is barely touched upon.) He stops at a diner, and ends up in bed with a waitress (Karen Allen); later, he befriends a construction worker named Carl (Cleavant Derricks), although the effect of that friendship is to drag Carl back to the booze and almost cuckold him; then comes a hitchhiker, Meg (Liane Balaban), who is so lovely and unscrewy that she and Cal have no option but to part; finally, Cal takes up with Dulcie (Julianne Moore), a headlong drinker with problems—otherwise known as malignant fantasies—of her own. Much of this is managed with finesse, and Freundlich casts ravishing glances at the passing landscape, with its pairing of the downbeat and the monumental—Dairy Queens and 7-Elevens crouched at the feet of elephantine hills. But a sense of striving overpowers the movie, and any deftness is sunk by the realization that Cal is heading for a rapprochement with his estranged father (David Keith); all the women along the way, it transpires, were just signposts, therapeutic markers, on the path to a Guy Thing. I worry about Billy Crudup; when you are insanely good-looking, you need to ration your high-cheekbone roles, with their instant solemnity, and loosen up with comedy, light or low. The scooter-riding, self-deprecating Gregory Peck of "Roman Holiday" was twice as memorable as his Ahab, and the Crudup of "Almost Famous" was both hairier and more appealing than the tortured womanizer of "World Traveler." Couldn't Cal have just stayed home, grown a mustache, and called his dad on the phone? ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY BRUCE McCALL

ADDRESSES OF THE GODS

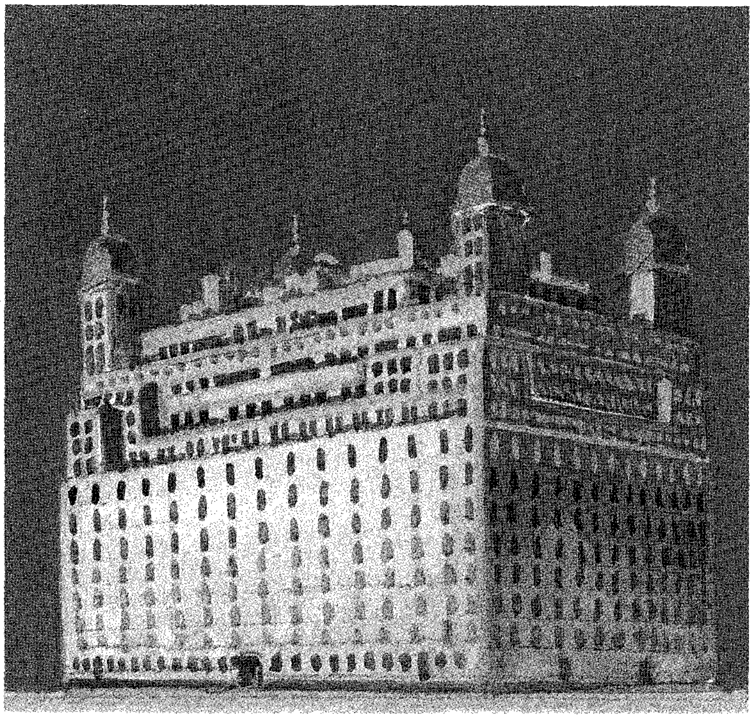


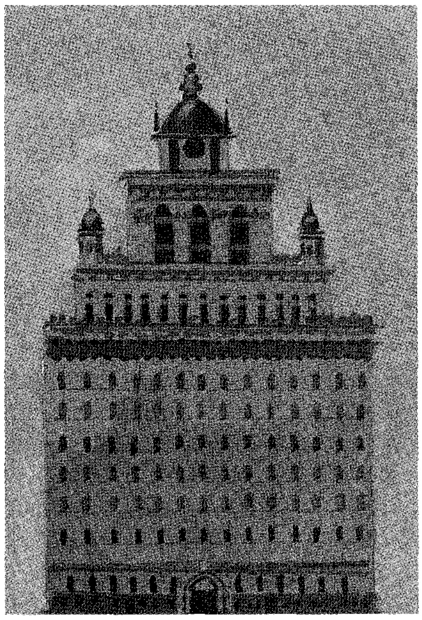
000 Fifth Avenue
It says oodles about this co-op board's civic clout that Big Zero is actually situated on Park, and that it is the only building whose basement has been in Architectural Digest. But disregard those "reign of terror" stories you may have heard—the board does reserve the right to rename dogs, but whether or not to divorce your spouse is almost always largely your call. Outstanding feature: lobby mug shots of tenants with overdue maintenance checks.



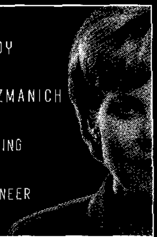
700½ Park
Realtors angling to one day hook this listing won't come out and say so, but nobody has ever bid successfully for space in this nine-story alabaster fancy, the only known collaboration between Stanford White and the pastry chef at Delmonico's. Pass on 700½ if you don't have a big family—these nine stories form one apartment. What would you be willing to pay for great N., W., S., E. views, 96 chmg rms, 24 fplcs, 148-car gar, etc., etc., etc.? It's not enough. It's not nearly enough.

The Custer
The lack of eastward-facing fenestration attests to the nasty prestige war with Fifth Avenue that was under way when this Central Park West high-rise opened, back in '29. Still a quirky building: the 11 P.M. curfew and the policy dictating that guests must use the tradesmen's entrance irk just about everybody. But walk-through fireplaces and your own belfry compensate somewhat. Outstanding feature: General H. Norman Schwarzkopf (Ret.), night doorman.





Coastal House
Stuffy plus—even mail from Madonna and her ilk is rejected from this property. Still the sole New York apartment building to charge for elevator rides and the only one whose super sits on the board of six Fortune 500 companies. New money is more welcome than old (viz., Page Six's sob-story item when Steve Jobs's new billiards room put the Dowager Empress of Romania out into the snow). Outstanding feature: the blood oath required at closing.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